

**THE SUBVERSION OF
THE REVOLUTIONARY
SOCIALIST ORIENTATION
TO THE N.D.P.**



a summary document of the
struggle against it – Jan. 1974

The Subversion of the Revolutionary Socialist Orientation to the NDP

(Inside front cover introduction -ed.)

How do the as yet relatively small revolutionary socialist forces see themselves being transformed into a vanguard party that could give leadership to the Canadian working class in their struggle to establish a socialist society?

How the Trotskyists see this process over the next period is outlined in the document Our Orientation to the NDP - the Strategy and its Tactical Application (published in pamphlet form as "The Socialist Vanguard and the NDP" and appearing on this website -ed.), which was adopted unanimously by their political committee and endorsed without dissent by their united forces in convention in 1970. This document projects the theory, and some historical experiences spanning more than 30 years, which sustain it.

However, just a short two years following its adoption, as the youth radicalization ebbed, this position came under sharp attack. Forces which had only recently come into the movement were soon joined by leaders of the Fourth International who launched a factional attack on the Canadian affiliate.

This attack knocked the majority of the leadership of the united Trotskyist movement off its base. After first ignoring the arguments of their opponents they soon fell into a whole series of shamefaced adaptations and capitulations to their pressure, so that behind the back of the movement and in a series of articles appearing in its public press they violated its longstanding practices.

When these adaptations so emboldened the opposition that a formal stand had to be taken, the majority leadership attempted to short circuit the opposition's attacks by retreating to a gross misinterpretation of established positions.

The document that follows is the summary contribution to this living process

by a group of leading activists as they attempted to defend this established position of the movement and who subsequently formed the core of the Socialist League and the contributors to the monthly FORWARD.

While it suffers to some extent from the circumstances of its presentation the following document has the great merit of defending the position outlined in Our Orientation to the NDP - the Strategy and its Tactical Application, in a whole series of very real and concrete circumstances.

THE SUBVERSION OF OUR ORIENTATION TO THE NDP

Submission to the LSA/LSO plenum by the Labor Party Tendency (LPT),
January 1974

INTRODUCTION

The Labor Party Tendency has been formed to defend the longstanding orientation of the Canadian Trotskyist movement to the mass labor party formation — the NDP (New Democratic Party).

As our 1970 document noted, the "NDP is the touchstone of class politics. All working-class politics revolve around it and an incorrect position on it is fatal." Furthermore, it pointed out, our "orientation and its effective application has been the hardest fought position in the history of the movement, established against trends of centrist conciliationism and liquidationism into the NDP, sectarian opposition to the party, and in more recent years spontaneist and adventurist hostility to it, leading to defection from the revolutionary vanguard itself."

Especially in the short period since our 1970 convention, the longstanding Trotskyist concept of the nature and role of the NDP in Canadian politics has come into its own — with the election of three provincial NDP governments.

There is the possibility in the next election of an NDP government in Ontario. What we saw in the youth radicalization is now fusing with and growing in the working class itself. The groundswell of the radicalization has focused attention on the federal NDP as never before.

At the same time, however, the LSA-LSO's orientation is being challenged as never before.

As the NDP appears to be approaching political office on an expanding front, essentially two contradictory processes have begun to work. The electoralist opportunism of the liberal reformist leadership is becoming more obvious to the broader layers of the radicalization. Nevertheless its very successes, and even more, the anticipations of its successes, in a period of relative economic and social stability, have been tending to dull the political perception of the activist layers around the NDP, tending to lead to various forms of acquiescence and abstentionism. As the NDP and its widening periphery becomes more caught up in electoralism and "real" politics - concepts of being part of a wider and more profoundly radical dynamic and process of social change, which the LSA/LSO projects in its orientation, have tended temporarily to be considered to be less relevant within the NDP itself.

While the revolutionary left continues to grow, its rate of growth in relation to the whole radicalization has temporarily declined. Relatively it has become more isolated and become more prone to ultra leftist illusions. Our opponents on the left, the ultra left Canadian Party of Labor, the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist Leninist), and even the Communist Party of Canada, have stepped up and widened their opposition to the NDP. Important forces of the radicalization, which in 1970 were either in the NDP - coalescing in the Waffle - or orienting to it, have pulled out of the NDP. In the process of defining themselves they have been taking an ultra left stance to the NDP. We now have the Revolutionary Marxist Group, with cross-Canada connections and claiming to be Trotskyist. The RMG has adopted, as one of its distinguishing features in its relations to the LSA/LSO, a sectarian opposition to the NDP. Part of the forces that formed the RMG came to that group after an all-out assault on our orientation within our movement. Prior to splitting from us they were aided and abetted in this assault by the IEC Majority Tendency (*Footnote:* International Executive Committee Majority Tendency in the Fourth International -- the group representing the positions championed by Ernest Mandel, Livio Maitan, & Pierre Frank.) Instead of opening doors for us, our (*abandoned*) orientation

to the NDP is barring us from the radical left as never before, presenting more challenges and making it more difficult for us to have an impact on it.

But perhaps even more important for us to consider is what our comrades and periphery could have expected from our long and patient NDP work — particularly over the last four years in and around the Waffle (*the large left-nationalist tendency that burst upon the NDP in 1969-70 —ed.*). The fact is that the largest left formation to have developed in some 25 years of the Canadian labor party blew up in our faces over the spring and fall of 1972. We proved unable to add any substantial forces to our movement in the course of the Waffle experience as we would have the right to expect.

This long anticipated development of a left wing in the labor party should have provided us with an opportunity for and actually resulted in some growth. If it didn't, for a period we would have expected it to sustain class struggle socialist currents in the labor party. These currents, on the basis of further experience, we would have hoped to win to our orientation and organization.

The Waffle defection did violence to all that we could have expected from our orientation. It has substantially changed the climate in the NDP to the disfavor of left ideas and formations —probably for some time to come. The Waffle did not come in our direction or open up new, if different, possibilities for us. Instead, it is in the process of forming a new party. The exact character of this party is not yet definable, but it is of some socialist or centrist type. It will have considerable dynamic for a whole period because of its line for an independent and socialist Canada.

Among our comrades, ideas and feelings that there is something wrong with our orientation, or our ability to implement it could not help but arise. Because we are serious revolutionaries concerned about building the revolutionary vanguard party, we expect results from our analysis and our work.

NDP ORIENTATION UNDER INTERNAL ATTACK

Moreover the LSA has been going through an intense internal struggle with forces that are challenging our orientation to the NDP. In fact looking back, while problems of the revolution in other areas of the globe have been in the forefront of contention, insofar as differences directly involving Canadian politics and LSA positions are concerned, opposition to our NDP orientation has been uppermost. This opposition within our movement developed in two stages. The first was the Offley-Davis group (*footnote*: LSA leaders in Nova Scotia, who subsequently became leaders in the RMG) which subsequently fused with the Mill group (*footnote*: Michel Mill, long-time former member of LSA/LSO, particularly in Quebec.) This was the Unified Minority Tendency from which the Mill group later withdrew to form the Groupe Marxiste Révolutionnaire. At a later stage the UMT merged into the Revolutionary Communist Tendency, joined in turn by the Horbatiuk-Sinclair-Gandall current.

At the same time, and subsequent to the Waffle-MISC (*footnote*: Movement for an Independent and Socialist Canada, the name adopted by Waffle upon leaving the NDP) pull-out from the NDP, the Red Circle formed and moved in our direction. We had running contact with this group in the NDP. They were adopting a hardening critical rejection of the NDP and were calling for an explicitly revolutionary caucus in its ranks. Later they became a component of the RMG. They were joined by the RCT faction when it split from our movement.

The record shows, with considerable clarity, that the central aspect of the disagreement with the UMT/ RCT, **that the major point of difference directly relevant to the Canadian scene, was our NDP orientation.** The record also shows the specific areas of these disagreements. The RCT, Red Circle, Old Mole, and GMR, are now united in the RMG. Differences on the NDP orientation, hitherto limited to our movement and periphery, will now tend to become part of a public debate as the RMG is called upon to explain its existence separate from the LSA/LSO.

These differences have also been projected in the international dispute in the Fourth International. This was signalled by the appearance of the document by Germain (Ernest Mandel) called "In defence of Leninism: in defense of the Fourth International." The general line of this document forms part of the platform of the IEC Majority Tendency. It is an attempted rebuttal of the Lenin-Trotsky Faction's (*footnote*: Lenin-Trotsky Faction is a current associated with the Fourth International headed by Joseph Hansen and the U.S. Socialist Workers Party) claims that the IEC majority is adapting to ultra-left pressures in the new radicalization, (*also*) with a counter charge that the LTF is adapting to rightist pressures. In this counter-charge the LSA and its orientation to the NDP is being used as a foil. This document (*by Germain*) makes a sweeping attack on the LSA/LSO, charging, among other things that "... the position which the LSA-LSO ... has adopted towards the reformist social democratic party, the NDP ... expresses a clear tailist (*adaptationist, subservient —ed.*) deviation from Leninism."

Up until recently we can say that our movement has stood on the document titled *Our Orientation to the NDP; the Strategy and it's Tactical Application*. Although there have been many documents on the CCF/NDP, submitted, argued over, and voted upon by various LSA-LSO conventions and plenums - this document is the broadest and most general statement of our view. It was prepared by R. Dowson, and presented to the 1970 convention in the name of the Political Committee. It was adopted by the PC without any dissent, and enthusiastically and unanimously accepted by the convention, This was when the radicalization was already moving into the NDP, as we had predicted it would. This document was understood to not only stand on the diverse work of the past, but to have pulled it all together.

Among the many discussion bulletins circulated for that convention was a special bulletin issued by the LSA-LSO central office. It contained all the major documents on the CCF-NDP that had been adopted by our movement, along with extensive reproductions of key articles from our press. Together

these showed the development of our views, which we all considered to culminate in the 1970 document.

Our Orientation to the NDP; the Strategy and its Tactical Application was not put to a vote of the convention. Although we all considered it the definitive general statement of our orientation, it also contained a history of this orientation's development spanning some three decades. We decided it was not advisable to ask many new and youthful delegates, who could not be familiar with this history, to vote on a document that contained such an amount of historical interpretation. **Nevertheless - just three years ago - the 1970 convention delegates and the elected leadership considered this document to be the key statement on our orientation.**

It was in this light that the PC submitted it as a contribution to the current international discussion. We were confident that our Canadian experience in dealing with a mass labor party formation would be of value to the world movement. It would be of special value, in our opinion, to any discussion of "entry sui generis" (*footnote: tactic of entry put forward by Michel Pablo in the early 1950's when he was executive-secretary of the Fourth International.*)

THE FIRST ATTACK

The first episode in the current dispute in our movement did not take place over the orientation itself as outlined in the 1970 document. It was over its application by Dowson, and *Labor Challenge* (the journal of the LSA). It was initiated by the UMT around the controversy that flared up in the New Brunswick NDP.

"The N.B. left, which the Young Socialists have come close to having hegemony over, crumbled," declared Walter Davis in a contribution appearing in Bulletin 26 (Nov. 15/72). The defeat of our movement and its orientation, according to these comrades was "a result of the *Labor Challenge* and Dowson's tailism."

"The 1971 repression of the N. B. Waffle," Davis wrote, "was led by the united forces of Lewis (leader of the NDP), Watkins (leader of the Waffle)" and Dowson (executive secretary of the LSA/LSO). The first two stand historically convicted of crimes against the revolution. The last (Dowson) must answer in the future . . . "

Davis also linked "tailism" in N.B. with the LSA's policy toward the Ontario Waffle in the fall of 1972. "The tailism of the leadership caused the LSA to miss important opportunities for adding to the forces of Trotskyism in Canada. How many times will this be the case?" Next the RCT presented a worked-out position in opposition to our orientation to the NDP in "The Revolutionary Communist Tendency Position on the NDP." This was submitted by Bret Smiley (Dec. 1/72)

In the opening paragraph we read, "It is characteristic of the eclecticism and pragmatism that substitutes for Marxism in the Canadian section that its quarter century genuflection at the altar of the 'labor party' has yet to be substantiated by a single serious attempt to analyse the main features of the social democratic formation in Canada. It therefore should come as no surprise that, given this theoretical vacuum, the most visible manifestation of the LSA's departure from Leninism politically can be detected in its line and practice with respect to the NDP."

Thus the RCT emphasized as the crucial issue at dispute, our NDP orientation. With this contribution it was not the application of the orientation but the orientation itself. And not accidentally, the RCT focused its attack on the 1970 document.

The next sentence quotes from the 1970 document, with minor additions by Bret Smiley. "The orientation to the CCF-NDP (Canadian Section of the Second International - Smiley) has been the fundamental orientation of Canadian Trotskyism since World War II. In general our position has been one of **unconditional** (highlighted by Smiley) support . . . " (*to the NDP -ed.*) He continues on as if the fatal errors in this quotation are self-evident.

He asks, "How did this capitulation to reformism come about? After all, the LSA sees itself as a revolutionary organization and at one time acted like one"

After this material appeared, more appeared on the same theme (Bulletin 29) . This was by two leading spokesmen of the RCT, B. Smiley and W. Davis. It was titled Social Democracy and the LSA. This too focused in on the 1970 document. It attacked certain formulations which up until then we had all agreed most succinctly expressed the essence of our orientation. Of necessity, to attack the essence of our orientation, they had to attack the key formulations that expressed that orientation.

This contribution tries to trace what it calls ". . . the degeneration of the LSA . . . back to the section's adaptation to the social democratic party which, as the leadership is fond of repeating, constitutes 'the focus of our politics'."

Space and time limits us. We will note the subheads of this document to give an idea of its contents and the areas of disagreement.

Section One is titled "'Labor Party' or 'Social Democracy'." It notes the ". . . seeming absence of 'social democracy' from the political vocabulary of the Canadian section." They conclude: "To call it (the NDP) anything else is pure opportunism at the theoretical level which we shall see is the essential precondition for the LSA's revisionism politically."

Our movement, its leading spokespersons and its press, have consistently argued against labelling the CCF/NDP social democratic. This flows from our conclusion that, by 1948, the CCF had become a labor party. In a major policy statement, *The CCF, Our Tasks and Perspectives* (footnote: This document was re-issued in 1970 as a key part of the discussion) dated July, 1951, we said: "It is no longer permissible for comrades to attempt to estimate the CCF and let themselves, and the party (we called ourselves the Revolutionary Workers Party at that time) be guided by ready-made formulae such as 'social democratic,' 'reformism,' 'political support of the bourgeoisie,' etc."

There followed an extensive quotation from a letter by Leon Trotsky to our French comrades as to whether these definitions were correct when applied to the French Socialist party in 1934. "Both yes and no," replied Trotsky. "Rather no than yes . . . the impossibility of applying henceforth a simple customary definition is of itself the unmistakable expression of the fact that we have to do with a centrist party, which as a consequence of the rapid evolution of the country still retains at its two poles the sharpest contradictions. One would have to be a hopeless scholastic in order to be prevented by the label Second International from seeing what is actually taking place. Only a dialectical definition of the Socialist Party, i.e., above all a concrete appraisal of its internal dynamics can give the Bolshevik-Leninist the possibility of drawing up a correct perspective and of adopting an active, not a waiting policy."

Following another extensive and relevant statement by Trotsky we continued: "Programmatically the CCF is a right wing Social Democratic (reformist) movement moving further to the right with an internal regime that has become less democratic in the past year. But its definition doesn't stop there. It only begins. Our definition must be dialectical. 'A concrete appraisal of its internal dynamics' must be made. Such a definition is essential to arrive at a correct orientation. Involved here is not just another working class party, not just a party larger than our own, but the proletariat itself (the class) organized and in the process of being organized. The question: what are the 'internal dynamics of the CCF'?' can be equally correctly posed, what are the internal dynamics of the Canadian proletariat?"

Section two is titled "Unconditional Support." It attacks this formulation in the 1970 document.

The title of Section Three is again a quote from the 1970 document – "Our orientation to the NDP, to the labor party, is an orientation to the working class in its process of developing political consciousness." They attack this concept.

Section four attacks the concept and is titled, "Intervention in the NDP is an intervention in the working class." This is also a long employed formulation.

Section five is titled "Consciousness in stages." This is Davis and Smiley's interpretation of our orientation. Section six "Conclusion: The Road to Reformism" (*which*) is their idea of where our orientation leads.

Appearing in the same bulletin with the Davis-Smiley document is another by Will Offley. This is titled "The Roots of Degeneration." Davis and Smiley tell us that Offley's contribution " . . . reproduced the main contours of the evolution of the 'labor party' orientation since the late 1940's."

All these UMT, then RCT, attacks on our orientation — all these attacks on the 1970 document and its major formulations - went by **unanswered**. All these attacks on our formulations - and they attacked these formulations because they did express the essence of our orientation went by with little comment by the leadership. Little or nothing was heard from the leadership in the branches, the Political Committee, or the plenum that fall.

LEADERSHIP DIRECTLY CHALLENGED

Several months before the convention, from a conversation with Marv Gandal, Dowson learned that he (Gandal) was preparing a document on the NDP orientation for the convention. This was before Gandal joined the Revolutionary Communist Tendency and prior to the formation of the United Tendency. It was apparent that this document would be a fundamental attack on our orientation.

Dowson raised this with several members of the leadership pointing out that this attack could not go unanswered. After the failure of these preliminary urgings, at a subsequent Political Committee meeting, he formally proposed that the leadership prepare a document on our orientation in the light of the broadening attacks on it. He proposed that time be allocated in the preconvention discussion, and on the convention agenda, for a discussion of our NDP orientation. The proposal was rejected - only Dowson voted for.

A few months later Stu Sinclair, a PC member who had become an RCT supporter, moved a motion on the PC that the majority present a resolution to the convention on the LSA's NDP orientation. By this time Gandal had

become an RCTer and his document an RCT line document. Sinclair's motion also asked that time be allotted to this question on the convention agenda. This too was rejected, with only Sinclair voting for it. Dowson abstained, with a statement that in principle he was completely in agreement that such a document and discussion were necessary. But on the eve of the convention he did not see how it was now possible. There was too little time left for its preparation, discussion on the PC, and presentation to the preconvention discussion.

It should be noted that other comrades were also concerned about the attacks on our orientation. The United Tendency (*tendency formed by the Dowson group -ed.*) in its first declaration, March 16, included as point three, "We stand on the theory and practice of our movement, with regards to the NDP, expressed in the document *Our Orientation to the NDP; the Strategy and its Tactical Application* (1970); the document 'The NDP and the Waffle' adopted by the 1971 plenum, and our practice with regards to the NDP and the Waffle up to the summer of 1972. Subsequently, in its appeal for delegated representation, the UT set aside this point to concentrate on the other two points of its platform. These were: (1) that the LSA/LSO should recognize the new nationalism that has arisen, due to the US takeover, as essentially progressive and link up with it; and (2) support of the international minority tendency (now the Lenin Trotsky Faction - LTF) and its platform of three planks to be advanced at the next world congress.

Gandal's document, by now an RCT line document, appeared three weeks before the convention (Bulletin 44, April 9). While the UT set aside the question of the NDP from its platform, two UT comrades contributed documents on the question. One was Harry Knight's contribution (Bulletin 54) titled "The Collapse of our NDP work in Ontario and some lessons for the future." The other was by R. Dowson called "Theory is Gray but Life is Green" (Bulletin 40, April 1) (*to appear on this website -ed.*).

This latter document is largely a response to a contribution from prominent supporters of the majority, Whitton and Dupont. They held the position that

it was the nationalism of the Waffle, which they characterized as bourgeois and reactionary, that led it to break from the NDP (class politics). In keeping with the view widely expressed by the majority leadership both in debate and in our press, Dupont claimed that the Waffle "is running into the arms of the bourgeoisie." They warned us that "comrades who do not want to follow the Waffle's footsteps should learn from its mistakes."

"Theory is Gray But Life is Green" attributed the majority leadership's failure to come to grips with Waffle as it was moving out of the NDP, to its reversal in its appreciation of the nature of the Waffle and its nationalism. This nationalism was suddenly discovered to be bourgeois and reactionary and the reason for the Waffle's break from the NDP. Dowson also claimed that instead of applying our strategic orientation to the NDP, the majority leadership had made a fetish out of the NDP. "This making a principle of staying in the NDP" **at all costs**, behind a **Stay and Fight Campaign**, when it was clear that Waffle was pulling the viable left out of the NDP, said Dowson, "has nothing in common with our longstanding practice with regards to the NDP." We had to consider the advisability of going out of the NDP with the left, for a period.

CHALLENGED . . . AND EVASION

This contribution, an attempt to discuss the application of our orientation, belatedly to be sure, won a flippant rejoinder from Comrade Fidler on the eve of the convention (Bulletin 52). It would appear that for factional purposes Fidler decided to present himself as the defender of the orientation against Dowson. He asked "does Dowson want us to 'lay aside' our orientation?"

The contribution by Harry Knight (Bulletin 54), which came out late and was probably not assimilated by the movement, explains the phenomenon observed by Germain and used in his attack on the Canadian section. This was the failure of *Labor Challenge* (September 17/72) to differentiate itself from the NDP brass — made all the more necessary by the brass's assault on

the mass left wing formation of the Waffle. Germain was unable to explain the absence of a critical attitude to the NDP leadership. It's ABC, he said, "Obviously it is as ABC for the leadership of the LSA as well," he conceded.

However, Knight explained this error of the LSA leadership. He outlined the PC majority record of what he called ". . . their zigzags and their adaptation both to the left and to the right." In the left caucus, he records how we tailed the politics of the Red Circle. And "as a by-product of the PC majority's mission against Waffle's supposed cop-out on socialism in favor of nationalism, of which there is not a shred of evidence . . . we see the euphoric lapses in our press, the muting of our criticism of the NDP leadership, which cannot be explained in any other context."

In the face of the long all-out assault on the NDP orientation, the PC majority leadership remained absolutely silent — except for the contribution by Dick Fidler. This (Bulletin 52) appeared as the delegates gathered at the convention site. While called In Defence of the Orientation to the NDP its title is obviously and unmistakably a misnomer. Fidler makes this clear in his introductory remarks.

After four paragraphs of speculative and supercilious jabs at the UT, he turns to the issue. "The comrades of the RCT, for their part, pose a much more explicit challenge to our perspective. The RCT has produced extensive documentation with wide ranging criticisms of formulations which have been used in the past to describe our NDP orientation. They raise some important questions about our record in applying the orientation." Then he turns away from the issue with his declaration that ". . . these are not the key questions before the membership of the League in this preconvention discussion."

Fidler bypasses the RCT polemics against our orientation by going "behind" the polemics - to what he calls their concept of party building. "Behind the RCT's polemics, there lies a fundamentally different view of revolutionary politics. The RCT's main tactical projection with respect to the NDP —the building of a 'revolutionary' caucus in the party - is directly counterposed to our conception of the basic thrust of our intervention, the building of class

struggle caucuses within the labor party which focus on the key political issues of the day."

The entire 17 pages of this document deal almost exclusively with 'Revolutionary Caucus' or 'Left Caucus'. Thus the orientation itself is approached only in an elliptical way. There is no defence here against the RCT's " . . . wide ranging criticisms of formulations . . . " It is as if there was no connection whatsoever between the formulations and the essence of the line they expressed. He makes no attempt to answer the RCT's " . . . questions about our record in applying our orientation." It is as if our record was not related to the orientation itself.

RCT LAYS DOWN THE LINE

Gandal's RCT line document against our NDP orientation concludes with a ten point summary. We will examine some of the salient points to show the totality of their rejection of our orientation and their understanding of the interrelationship between what Fidler calls the "formulations used to describe the orientation" **and the orientation itself.**

Point one rejects our concept that the NDP is a labor party. They characterize the NDP as a "social democratic labor party . . . It is not 'in the way and on the way' to the socialist revolution, it is just in the way — plain and simple." Point two declares "the NDP is not the 'focus of our politics' . . . The NDP is merely an important work area."

The next three points challenge our line on the NDP for being posed as a principle "because it is the class party and it does not matter whether we are (actually) in the party or not — it is the focus of our politics." The NDP, according to point four, "must be treated tactically. In point five they say "endorsing it might depend on an assessment of whether an NDP electoral victory would accelerate or retard the class struggle."

Point six insists "we demonstrate that we support this party grudgingly, reluctantly, that the emphasis is on 'critical' rather than 'support'. We do not

sing the praises of the NDP nor do we set 'NDP to power' or 'Vote NDP' in screaming headlines which betray a certain inappropriate enthusiasm on the front page of the press. It insists that "we quite clearly explain 'in a popular manner' that we support this party as a rope supports the hanged... "

Point seven demands that "Our press and cadre always should emphasize that the NDP exists to repress and betray the class struggle and to rationalize the capitalist system. That is its primary function. To the extent it is 'responsive' to mass movements, it responds to deflect and defuse them. To the extent that it has 'progressive' features, it is significantly no more progressive than the most enlightened wing of the bourgeoisie. The election of NDP governments in B.C., Manitoba and Saskatchewan provides excellent opportunities to provide graphic running commentaries on the bankruptcy of social-democratic reformism."

Point eight attacks another formulation of the 1970 document. "The slogan 'Win the NDP to Socialism' should be dropped since the NDP cannot be won to socialism. Revolutionaries do not blatantly deceive the masses and promote such gross illusions."

Point nine challenges us to intervene " . . . and in the labor party with the purpose of presenting the full program." Point ten counterposes expulsions from the NDP as being "preferable to" - what the RCT alleges the LSA has been practising in the NDP - liquidation of the revolutionary program and underground isolation at all costs."

From the record it is an unchallengeable fact that while it was under this sustained all-down-the-line assault, the leadership did not defend the longstanding orientation of the Canadian Trotskyists to the NDP. This alone could not help but weaken the understanding of the LSA's ranks and undermine their confidence in our orientation. This danger was all the greater as the attack from within, carried by the RCT, was but a reflection and a supplement to the attack on our orientation from outside by all our opponents on the left.

THE PLACE OF THE POLITICAL RESOLUTION

There was no NDP document and the discussion was restricted to the political resolution which attempted to encompass a wide ranging series of problems confronting the movement. The section on the NDP in the Political Resolution titled "The NDP and the Crisis of leadership" was quite limited.

It had nothing to say on what Fidler recognized as " . . . wide ranging criticisms of formulations which have been used in the past to describe the NDP orientation." Despite the extensive documentation of the RCT, it didn't touch on what Fidler described as " . . . important questions about our record in applying our orientation." Among these "important questions" were charges of tailism and of liquidation into social democratic reformism! Because it ignored these "wide ranging criticisms" and "important questions" the Political Resolution and its section on the NDP were completely irrelevant to the problems confronting the LSA/LSO.

Can a revolutionary socialist cadre organization remain silent before the charges of tailism and capitulation to reformism, which are flung at it from a sizeable current within its own ranks? These charges cannot be dismissed as factional excesses. The RCT tried to document them and motivate them on the basis of political analysis. It is hard to conceive of a leadership nurtured on Trotskyism, so fond of quoting Cannon, remaining silent under such circumstances. The fact is, however, they did remain silent.

There were no discussions of any significance at any official level of the movement on how to combat this assault. No discussion to make any assessment of it, to determine whether it was completely false or had any substance that might require us to redefine some aspects of our orientation. But though the Central Office leadership remained silent, they were not unaffected by this all-out two-year attack on our orientation.

RETREATS AND ADAPTS

Aside from Fidler's narrowly defined contribution, the only evidence of the thinking of the CO leadership is the "Political Resolution." It has another

notable aspect besides its irrelevance to the key problem confronting the LSA/LSO, which was posed by the UMT and the RCT, that is, the Political Resolution is as clean as a hound's tooth of all the formulations which so offended the RCT! Gone are all the formulations that they demanded should be dropped! We look in vain for "labor party," "in the way and on the way," "the focus of our politics -even when it is not the centre of our work," "unconditional support," "intensive fraction work with a non-split perspective," "strategic orientation," (or) "Win the NDP to Socialism," etc.

When the RCT demanded that these formulations be dropped, they motivated their demand. As we showed previously, they locked these formulations right into the line. They were demanding that we drop the longstanding line of the movement. According to their view the terminology was not accidental. They were not to be satisfied with new words and new phrases. They weren't looking for some new expression of the same fundamental strategic orientation that might better describe more subtle aspects of it or different nuances of it. According to them the terminology in the 1970 document very accurately and succinctly expressed the line - how it should be, and had been, practised by the cadres of the LSA/LSO over the years.

The Political Resolution contains a very general, largely historical and descriptive presentation of our orientation. It answers none of the charges levelled by the RCT and it drops, not just one or two but all the offending formulations of the 1970 document. It does this without any explanation to the membership.

We would gather that, although they once thought that these formulations did accurately express our line, the authors of the Political Resolution must have changed their minds. On closer examination, and in the light of experience, they have concluded that these formulations really have little, if anything at all, to do with the essential line — in either its expression or its practice. It appears in fact, that they must have concluded that these

formulations have only served to expose the line and make it vulnerable to the attack of the ultra-left RCT. So . . . to defend the line, the formulations must be dumped!

However, we can only speculate. We were not, and have not yet been told the reasons. None of the offending formulations that appeared in the 1970 document appear in the 1973 Political Resolution. We note in passing that the Political Resolution was edited between its appearance in draft form for the preconvention discussion, and its publication in *Labor Challenge* (July 23/73.) In its preconvention form it described the NDP as a "labor party." In the final, edited version the words "labor party" are replaced by the words "Social Democratic labor party." At another place where the draft read "Revolutionary Marxists give **support** to the NDP as the elementary class alternative" the final version now reads "....give **critical support**" (our emphasis) .

The formulations have been dropped — but has the line been changed?

Around the time of the formation of the LPT, many of the comrades involved had noted a recurring tendency in the movement. Many comrades had taken on the practice, when referring to the NDP, of no longer calling it a labor party, but rather of referring to it as a quote/unquote/labor party. It had become increasingly prevalent to replace the term labor party altogether, by the designation social democratic party. Many comrades were objecting to the use of the term "unconditional" in describing our strategic and long-range orientation to the NDP. Some objected to saying we "support" the NDP. They wanted to emphasize that, on the contrary, we **oppose** the NDP, period. Although this did not figure high in our thinking, its prevalence made us uneasy and we will return to this problem of terminology.

What struck us particularly, following the convention, was the change in *Labor Challenge*. In the LPT founding statement we said "since the convention a whole series of important articles relating to different aspects of the NDP and our work have been published in our press. These articles show a clear trend towards a sectarian revision of our longstanding strategic orientation, in our opinion, and, in their totality, constitute an abandonment of our orientation to the mass labor party."

LABOR CHALLENGE RECORD

We will now show the magnitude of the break with our NDP orientation by recent articles appearing in *Labor Challenge*. We have chosen four episodes which we think are sufficient to establish our point. This was an arbitrary choice. A full and detailed analysis would fill volumes dealing with almost every issue.

In order to appreciate the enormity of the break we will recall a few aspects of our orientation. Our position of unconditional and critical support to the Canadian labor party is based on our understanding that in this whole period the NDP represents in general, an advance in the rising political consciousness of the Canadian working class. To pull cadres together, to build the revolutionary vanguard party, it is necessary, through our transitional concept of politics to address ourselves to the working class. As the 1970 document put it, "the NDP remains the focus of all our politics" — even when it is not "the centre of our activities." The NDP is not just another working-class party. It is the concrete expression of independent labor political action at the present general level of the class struggle. The NDP reflects, focuses and advances the consciousness of the working class. We have to participate in this process.

Our propaganda must be based on an understanding of the level of consciousness of the class and the real viability of its present political unity and development. We cannot criticize the NDP solely from the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism. But we must primarily prove our case against the reformists by exposing their treachery when it involves some matters of the gravest concern to the masses. Such an approach requires an activist intervention in the organizations and struggles of the class and is dynamically counterposed to the fundamentalist critics who expound their views as so much dogma, from the sidelines of the working class and their organizations.

At this time we are a tiny revolutionary grouping. To grow into a party, we must employ our understanding of the realities of the class struggle to put forward demands or solutions that appear practical and are necessary to the

working class. We direct ourselves to its understanding and its needs. We orient ourselves to its mass labor party. We fight for transitional and democratic demands in and around the NDP. We criticize, oppose, and seek to destroy the influence of the reformist leadership. We fight the reformists in order to break their hegemony over the politicizing layers of the working class in the NDP and to break their influence on the class as a whole.

Our tactics flow out of this interventionist strategy. We cannot pretend that the NDP leadership never take generally correct positions - if it never did, how would one account for its influence over the class? When the NDP leadership take progressive positions they speak to the workers' immediate needs. When they take reactionary positions they speak to their own interests as a privileged bureaucratic apparatus, as petit-bourgeois reformists temporarily at the helm of the workers movement. We pose the socialist alternative sensitively and intransigently. We have nothing in common with the testamentary politics of sectarians. Has *Labor Challenge* adhered to this orientation?

We will examine *Labor Challenge's* coverage of the concept of the "Women's Ministry in British Columbia." In the September 10, 1973 issue there appeared an article on the women's ministry which constituted a 180 degree about turn, a complete reversal of the previous position that appeared in several articles in *Labor Challenge* less than a year earlier. Even more important, this September 10 article constituted an undocumented, complete reversal of our line designed explicitly to meet the very problems posed by such a demand that had been adopted by the 1971 summer plenum of the Central Committee of the LSA.

The September 10 article titled "Diversion for Feminists - Women's Ministry" (ostensibly a review of a recent publication of the BC NDP Women's Committee) deals with the demand that the BC NDP government establish a Women's Ministry. This demand was passed as a resolution by the November 24-26, 1972 BC NDP convention.

Curiously, this article completely reverses our original support for this demand **without explanation**. In the December 11, 1972 issue of *Labor*

Challenge, an article dealing with the BC convention titled "Women Press Struggle in BC NDP" asserted:

"A question of key importance posed by the convention was: Who makes the political decisions in the NDP? This issue emerged most clearly around the passage of a resolution calling for a Ministry of Women's Affairs to be established in their first sitting of the Legislature. The debate on the ministry was the highlight of the convention."

The article continues in the same vein: "The resolution was passed by a solid majority . . . But in spite of the firm decision taken by the convention Premier Barrett informed the press that the ministry would be very low in his government's priority list. It is clear that what Barrett and other right wing NDP cabinet ministers object to is not the proposal for a women's ministry itself, but the thrust of the struggle and program behind this proposal . . . The Barrett leadership . . . does not want to yield an inch to the radical dynamic behind the NDP convention call for a women's ministry . . ."

And it concludes in its summary paragraph: "What are the most immediate tasks before the socialist Left of the BC NDP? The left is challenged to give leadership to those forces seeking to assert the right of the party to control its legislative caucus, especially around the demand for a Ministry of Women."

Our original position of all-out support of this demand carried on into subsequent issues of *Labor Challenge* — for instance an article in the March 5, 1973 issue. In that article, reporting the occupation by militants of a child-care project administered by a "Social Credit-appointed government bureaucracy" we stated that "many NDPers who supported the demands of the occupation say that this spotlighted once again the need for a ministry of women's rights. Such a ministry, if it were rooted in women's groups across the province, would bring enormous pressure to bear on the (NDP) government to meet its responsibilities to women and to carry out NDP policy in this area."

In sharp contradiction to all our previous statements of support of the demand for a women's ministry, the article that appeared in the September

10, 1973 issue of *Labor Challenge* characterizes the campaign for a women's ministry as a "diversion for feminists," as "a false course for the (NDP) women's rights committee." The concept of a women's ministry which *Labor Challenge* said in our March 5 issue "would bring enormous pressure to bear on the NDP government;" *Labor Challenge* **now** says "tends to ease the pressure on the government to enact specific reforms of benefit to women. In this sense it lets Barrett, Trudeau and company off the hook." How "Trudeau and company" are "let off the hook" is not clarified.

That the September 10 article is a complete reversal of our position on the women's ministry is not so much as mentioned, let alone explained to the readers of *Labor Challenge*. *Labor Challenge* has reconsidered and dumped our previous viewpoint. Few members of the LSA/LSO are even aware that the public position of the movement has been changed. There has been no circular to that effect and there has been no documentation for the education of our comrades.

When the delegates passed the resolution for a women's ministry a year ago, it is quite clear that we saw it as an anti-bureaucratic move of considerable importance. The convention previously had passed a whole series of resolutions on equal pay legislation, allocations of funds for, and the structuring of, child-care facilities — in fact, almost our entire body of women's liberation demands insofar as we were able to develop them in resolution form. The resolution on the ministry capped it all off.

It was a demand that the NDP parliamentary caucus carry out the will of the delegates who had been voting in line with resolutions passed by the rank and file of the movement. The resolution expressed a profound unease as to the willingness of the liberal-reformist brass, in the face of bourgeois opposition, to implement the will of the party ranks.

That's how we saw the resolution in 1972 — that it posed "a question of key importance" — "who makes the political decisions in the NDP" — and that's how Barrett himself saw it, according to our 1972 coverage.

"Barrett, speaking to the convention itself, stressed that although the delegates set policy, the party's 'political arm' — the government — has the

right to decide which of their policies should be implemented. This statement rightly disturbed many delegates since it implied that the role of the membership is purely advisory and that membership decisions in convention have no force or meaning. The need to establish the democratic right of the party membership to control the decision making of the NDP will be the focus of an important struggle in the party in the next period."

How different is that interpretation of the 1972 resolution from the interpretation that is presented in a slighting, passing, and matter-of-fact – not to speak of a totally false — way in the September 1973 article. "The resolution did not demand that the government enact any new legislation. It did not demand that the government do anything other than set up another ministry which it explicitly described as being integrated into the existing bureaucratic framework of the government and state apparatus."

What happened within the year that caused *Labor Challenge* to make one evaluation of the women's ministry demand, sustained by the events out of which it arose in the fall of 1972, and to comment on it in such a totally different way in the process of reviewing a **pamphlet** almost a year later?

Were there some new and important developments in the interval that caused us to reconsider our previous evaluation of the significance of the demand? Was it co-opted by the right wing brass? Did events so unfold as to make a once fighting demand into a substitute for ongoing struggles around concrete issues confronting women activists? Did it become a diversion from mass action into maneuverings and dickerings in the parliamentary arena?

A careful reading of the September 1973 article reveals it to be notably lacking even in so much as a suggestion that circumstances surrounding the demand for a women's ministry are involved.

Nor does the fact that *Labor Challenge* devotes an entire page to the question nine months after the demand was passed suggest that the demand was based largely on conjunctural circumstances and what we said was its chief significance, that it posed "who makes political decisions in the NDP."

In fact, with the protests around the BC NDP government's labor legislation that split this month's convention down the middle, it would appear that what we have said lay behind the women's ministry that "the need to

establish the democratic right of the party membership to control the decision-making of the NDP will be the focus of an important struggle in the party in the next period" has become a matter of increasing importance.

The September 1973 article, when you probe further into it – since it sticks to commenting on two speeches in support of the demand that were delivered eight and nine months ago at the same time as we were establishing our position of support of the demand, indirectly affirms that the actual circumstances surrounding the development of the demand are irrelevant. It suggests, although it is not said explicitly, that some thing more is involved, that up until September 1973 we ourselves were guilty of making an error of much greater significance, although it does not actually characterize the nature of the error.

In order to try to use Yandle and Corrigan as a foil to justify a change in our line, the September 1973 article has to resort to such argumentative methods as saying that "Yandle and Corrigan imply . . ." that "they seem to view . . ." that their "approach. . . which could disarm" . . . etc., etc.

The pamphlet that the September 1973 article polemicizes against is an effective presentation of the views that we ourselves expressed just eight and nine months ago. However one of the articles (Yandle's), as the September 1973 article makes special note of, is titled "A Ministry of Women's Rights – a structural solution." It would seem that this phrase, "a structural solution," is of considerable importance. It is, therefore, useful to quote Yandle at some length in order to understand what she really said in her written speech of some months ago, and how at variance with reality *Labor Challenge's* handling of this is.

Yandle explains what she means by the phrase "the problem is a structural problem and therefore the solution must be structural as well." A considerable portion of this article is devoted to making the point that the problems confronting women in capitalist society, as she herself summarizes "are not accidental by-products of the system but are completely and inseparably part of the system." Refreshingly, and obviously a reflection of the profoundly radical impact that women's liberation is having on the NDP, Yandle attributes all the major ills of the day to the fact that society is "based on a capitalist economy" and scores liberal reformists for not recognizing that poverty, etc. are "not going to be eliminated without making some very fundamental changes in the system of things." In summarizing this section she writes: "The way to begin to correct this is systematically to change and, if necessary, dismantle those institutions that now perpetuate inequality and oppression and to substitute for them new, socialist institutions."

Having dealt with the problem in general, Yandle moves onto the question of the Ministry of Women's Rights, and **how she** personally sees it.

"The first thing to understand about the Ministry is that the idea was not conceived in the head of a bureaucrat, or by anyone concerned with channeling the women's movement into a bureaucracy. Nor was it conceived as a substitute for the women's movement. The idea first came from the NDP Women's Committee itself; it was seen not as a panacea for every ill, but as a means to begin the task of breaking down the structural inequality that women face."

Finally, in the summary she likens the demand to those which "we as socialists argue for in relation to the labor movement – the right to strike, the shorter work week, the removal of repressive laws – none of these things is designed to replace the labor movement." So "the Ministry of Women's Rights is not proposed as a substitute for organizing to change these institutions. Neither is it a crutch to lean on or a structure to hide behind."

Having emphasized the possibilities she hopes reside in the demand, Yandle mentions "some of the things a Ministry cannot do. A Ministry cannot take the place of women organizing. A ministry will not end the social inequality of women. No significant social change is ever made by government decree alone unless that decree reflects what is already happening in society at large and is thus the reflection of a larger movement. "

Since it is apparent that Yandle in her views as expressed in the reviewed pamphlet – and we are referred to no others – in no way sees the women's ministry as a substitute to struggle for concrete policies which meet women's needs, as *Labor Challenge's* September 1973 article says is necessary; since it is apparent that Yandle in no way sees (from her written views) the ministry as a substitute for mass action to involve masses of women who have not yet taken action and to pressure the labor movement to actively support these campaigns, as *Labor Challenge's* September 1973 article says is necessary; and since it is apparent that she is by no means opposed (but from her written views, quite the contrary) to demands that the Barrett government set up abortion clinics, become a model as an employer of women workers, etc., etc., then what does it actually mean to end up as the September 1973 article does with the ringing cry that the women's rights committee must spearhead campaigns demanding concrete legislation now, and "reject the dead end strategy proposed by Yandle and Corrigan"?

To the average reader of the September 1973 article, *LC's* attack (on the views of Yandle and Corrigan as they are expressed in the pamphlet that

we have polemicized against) can only appear to be essentially unprincipled, dogmatic, sectarian and factional, besides being a quite unintelligible attack on the concept of a Women's Ministry which up until that moment we ourselves quite fully supported.

Does the Women's Ministry demand, contrary to our understanding of it last December, represent "a false course," as our September 1973 article now claims? On the basis of all the evidence presented in the September 1973 article we cannot by any means conclude that it does. It is an anti-bureaucratic demand, a formulation of the determination of the membership of a labor party formation that they, and the policies that their delegates formulate in convention, should determine the policies of the leadership of that labor party formation in parliamentary office.

A question remains – what is meant by "the dead-end strategy" allegedly proposed by leading BC NDP women activists Yandle and Corrigan? We have presented the substance of what they wrote, on what is suggested to be an extremely significant phrase in their characterization of the ministry – that it is a "structural solution." We have no cause to differentiate ourselves from how this phrase is explained in Yandle's summary paragraph – the full realization of women's goals "will not be achieved until this society is fundamentally changed, until we change these structures and institutions of our society and economy that lock us into our present situation . . ."

In fact, in characterizing the LSA's attitude to the NDP in government, in the report titled "The NDP and the Waffle" submitted to and adopted by a plenum of the Central Committee of the LSA/LSO in the summer of 1971, we strongly identify with Yandle's approach of structural solutions in the NDP government. On page 32 of the bulletin containing that report we affirm, in opposition at that time, not to the editors of *Labor Challenge*, but to Manitoba Wafflers, that :

"We, on the other hand, aim to bring all the mass movements to bear upon the NDP governments, to make those governments not substitutes for the mass movements, but powerful supplements. Where it is in office, the NDP should be challenged to put the resources of the **state machinery** (our emphasis) at the service of those movements, to build their campaigns and to implement their demands to the fullest extent possible.

"As the abortion campaign in Manitoba demonstrates, these NDP regimes are very vulnerable to mass pressures from the left. In many cases, all we have to do is mount a campaign; **it is not necessary to urge the government to actually violate the criminal code.** (Our emphasis.) We can

simply pressure it to use its control of provincial hospitals, in accordance with the tribunals required under existing federal law . . . ‘‘

By means of this strategic approach of intervening within the NDP (of putting demands on the NDP government) and through the pressure of the mass feminist movement, we caused the anti-abortion forces to back down in Manitoba. The impact of this strategy was devastatingly revealed in the way in which the Schreyer government was forced to disassociate itself from the notorious anti-abortionist Borowski, ultimately leading to Borowski's resignation from the cabinet.

In reference to the question of how Marxists should approach the question of the state in relation to structural solutions, there is one paragraph in the September 1973 *Labor Challenge* article, inserted at the bottom of the second column from the end, that requires comment.

This paragraph, addressing itself to feminists, tells them that they must understand that the state apparatus cannot be taken over by women, in reference we must suppose, to a ministry in the parliamentary apparatus of a bourgeois state – that this will not alter the basic character of the state as an instrument of class oppression and exploitation. The state, the September 1973 article notes "must be replaced in the process of a revolutionary transformation of society, a socialist revolution."

All of this is very true, but how relevant is it to the question before us? Is this paragraph a hint to our readers? Is it possible that *Labor Challenge* is trying to suggest that when all is said and done the demand for a women's ministry is a violation of principle? Are we suggesting that to support such a demand betrays a profound ignorance of the state as an instrument of class oppression and fosters the most dangerous illusions, that the demand of itself and in itself is totally false?

Are the editors of *Labor Challenge* stating, by implication, that the 1971 Plenum document's position of challenging the NDP to put the resources of the state machinery at the service of movements such as the Women's liberation movement is false and illusory as well?

In the 1971 report the Central Committee characterized such challenges, an abstentionist criticism. Is *Labor Challenge* now stating that such a position entails the betray of revolutionary principle?

It may well be that Yandle and Corrigan have some illusions as to the nature of the state, although they have the profoundly radical understanding that women's oppression is structured right into society and that profoundly radical understanding that there is a need for totally new structures. They may think that the structuring of the new socialist society can take place on

some progressive piecemeal basis of restructuring the old capitalist apparatus. If they hold this view, it is by no means clear from their written words in the pamphlet under review. And, even if it were so, it is debatable that we would use this occasion to take them to task in this matter.

Above all, what have such illusions got to do with the position that we Trotskyists took of support for a women's ministry almost a year ago, which *LC* dumped surreptitiously in this same article? We had then, and we have now, no illusions whatsoever about the need, in order to lay the basis for the structures of the new society, to smash the bourgeois state institutions. Our position was not based on any illusions about the state but on an understanding of the political situation in British Columbia, on the level of the class struggle, on the relationship of class forces, on the role of the labor party in this struggle. The demand expresses the objective needs of the class. It flows out of their present level of consciousness and takes them forward in struggle, on this occasion, against the reformist bureaucracy that is in office in the parliamentary apparatus of the BC sector of the Canadian bourgeois state.

While it is essential that we Trotskyists acquaint those who will listen with the broad historic experiences of the past – with Marxist theory – particularly with the Marxist theory of the state, the masses are going to learn about it, the need to smash it and to build new forms useful to them, in the process of making demands, particularly on those who they think represent them but who cower before the necessary surgery. The illusions of the masses are going to be dispelled by experience.

The Central Committee emphasized the importance of the workers' experience in learning this lesson about the state in the *1971 Plenum report* (page 32):

"We should welcome this development (of an NDP government) without reservations; the governmental experience is the best possible experience we can have with the NDP – not because the NDP under its present leadership will establish an anti-capitalist workers' government, but because the Canadian workers will only overcome their reformist illusions by seeing in action the total inadequacies of social democracy. But whether the advanced layers of the class succeed in drawing the correct conclusions from their experiences depends on the intervention of the revolutionary socialists, and our ability to consolidate and build, in the course of the struggle, with the reformists, a mass revolutionary alternative to the reformists. . . ."

But to build a revolutionary alternative means to be able to influence and associate ourselves with the most radical and democratic elements within the NDP who are beginning to draw essentially correct conclusions about the nature of the class struggle. We cannot succeed in this endeavor by

falsely pointing an accusing finger of reformist illusions (or making vague innuendos leading in that direction) to such promising elements. Instead, we should develop a friendly and serious attitude to such elements and attempt to present to them a rounded appreciation of our NDP orientation.

By our giving critical support to the NDP, while we continue to project the need to build the revolutionary vanguard party and even declare that support the more effectively to pull together the nucleus of such a party, sectarians and dogmatists accuse **us** of promoting illusions about the NDP. In calling for the NDP to power, to parliamentary office, essentially the illusion of power which in reality resides in the bourgeoisie's control of the means of production and the multitudinous forms of the state rule, sectarians and dogmatists accuse **us** of promoting illusions about the nature of parliament. But the illusions are already there and our course is designed to rid the masses of their illusions about parliament and the state. It is by placing demands on the NDP government that the workers in BC are going to learn both the nature of the NDP, and NDP government, and the bourgeois state. That is the essence of our transitional concept.

These are the concepts that *Labor Challenge* (September 10 1973 issue) dumped in its reversal of the Central Committee's clear and unequivocal position that was in harmony with our longstanding strategic orientation to the NDP.

MANITOBA ELECTIONS

How has *Labor Challenge* adhered to our strategic orientation in the Manitoba election coverage? We refer to Volume 4, No. 10, 11 and 12. In this series of articles *Labor Challenge* dealt with the NDP as an opponent political organization which we could not be said to support in any serious way. It did not deal with the NDP in the framework of our orientation and our understanding of its contradictory character. *Labor Challenge* attacked both the campaign and the NDP as a political party, in the framework of abstract support and concrete massive criticism.

Coming into the election, the editors of *Labor Challenge* made a withering attack on the NDP government. They paid no heed to the realities of the NDP's slim parliamentary majority, as if this was not a matter of special concern to workers at a time of an election. They gave only slighting and grudging recognition to the positive legislation that the NDP government had actually passed.

In the lead article of the June 25th issue, *Labor Challenge* ridiculed "the very modest reforms it legislated in the preceding four years" and their extension such as sewers, waterworks, free denticare from birth to age twelve and government fire insurance. It dismissed the impact that it is

having in the rural areas through "policies aimed at preserving small towns and family farms." These of course are among the most serious concerns of the working masses and are a key to their radicalization.

We must ask: to whom was *Labor Challenge* addressing itself? We can say for sure that it wasn't speaking to the consciousness of the class. This article didn't provide us a hearing in the NDP either, which is the "focus of our politics". Perhaps it was intended to prove to Comrade Germain that we are not tailists, and thus we end up addressing ourselves to the particular concerns of the "vanguard."

In another article the editors wrote: "Schreyer and his NDP government have made strenuous efforts to placate business interests during their four years in office.... Big Business defines the election, inaccurately, as a contest between free enterprise. and socialism . . . the NDP's program no more represents socialism than the other parties favor free enterprise . . . " This scorn and ridicule of the NDP and Big Business's very real opposition to it – of which the Canadian workers are very much aware – is qualified by an interesting innovation used to characterize the NDP. The editors state that the NDP is supportable only in that it is "ultimately responsible to the labor movement." Heretofore we have characterized the NDP as being "labor-based" which defines its essential class character, its significance, despite its leadership and program, and that is why we are oriented to it. With this new formulation *Labor Challenge*'s message to NDP present and future supporters in this election was that the only progressive significance of the NDP is not its present, but only in its "ultimate" responsibility to their interests. Support of the NDP was presented as defensible only on broad historical grounds, solely on what we alleged it posed, symbolically, and not on the record of anything at all that it has done, or that it actually projects that might be in the interests of the working class. The implications of this new formulation are, to say the least, somewhat questionable and certainly a step away from our heretofore precise concepts.

In a subsequent paragraph in the same article *Labor Challenge* alleged that the "NDP regime in Manitoba is administering capitalism, helping to make the system run better for the businessmen." We assume that *Labor Challenge* was not alleging that this is the aim of the NDP leadership. **Their** fatal flaw is that they think the interests of the workers are not diametrically opposite to those of the capitalist class – the real rulers (not parliament) of the system – and think that an extensive network of social reforms, even socialism, can be realized through accumulative reforms of capitalism. Unfortunately the working class also shares these illusions, promoted fundamentally by the capitalist class and their liberal and Tory ideologues. It is because the NDP is not "helping to make the system run better for businessmen" that "Big Business" quite clearly and unmistakably opposes the NDP, even somewhat hysterically some times, when they define, as *Labor Challenge* previously noted, the election "as a contest between free enterprise and socialism. "

The article continued in this way onto page four where we were told that the "key challenge is how to use the opportunity presented by the election to develop the struggle against big business domination." Up until now we have assumed that the electoral struggle and victory for the labor party is a struggle against big business domination and at that juncture was a key one. Did the editors of *Labor Challenge* consider that mass action was the only key challenge at the time of the Manitoba election?

How can these articles be said in any way to adhere to our well worked out orientation to the NDP – an orientation which neither gives anything to reformism, but does not ignore its hold either?

The coverage in Volume 4, No. 11, in our second issue on the election, abandoned a key concept of our strategic orientation to the NDP. The key to placing our unconditional and critical support in an understandable context has always been not to make an identity of the liberal-reformist leadership with the labor party itself. We never conceded the party to the leadership.

We have a stated policy to win the NDP, the rank and file of that party, to a socialist program. This key concept goes out the window with the following quotations from Volume 4 No. 11: "The NDP holds out little prospect of major advance . . . the NDP's betrayal of native peoples' support . . . the whole NDP approach is one of smug self-satisfaction, appealing to the conservative instincts of middle-class Manitobans.... No substantial force within the party is today advancing a socialist alternative . . . the NDP campaign is in no way aimed at increasing popular desire and readiness for change . . . the NDP, posing as moderate administrators of the capitalist system . . ."

The page four headline is "Manitoba NDP blurs class image." The comrades who wrote this article have blurred the most important of distinctions. They have blurred the distinction between the liberal-reformist leadership of the NDP and the party as a whole and thereby dumped our longstanding position of unconditional and critical support.

We must ask the comrades of the editorial board if they thought that Gandal's document on the NDP (Bulletin #44, April 9/72) which was submitted during the last pre-convention discussion differs in orientation from the coverage of the Manitoba election in these two issues. The 10 conclusions that Gandal and the RCT posed are basically in accord with the treatment of the NDP in this coverage. This is particularly true of conclusion number 7 (page 40): "The election of NDP governments in B.C., Manitoba and Saskatchewan provides excellent opportunities to provide graphic running commentaries of the bankruptcy of social democratic reformism."

And in point number 6 (on page 39), we find: "We demonstrate that we support this party grudgingly, reluctantly, that the emphasis is on 'critical' rather than 'support'."

Although the comrades responsible for *Labor Challenge* may have reservations about the exact formulations in the RCT document, it is clear that they have much more in common with it than they have with our well-developed and long-held strategic orientation. Marxists understand that you can't really understand a thing until you understand its opposite. The 1970 document is the thing in this case. So far, the Gandal document is the opposite and constitutes the only clear critique that justifies the mistaken line of *Labor Challenge*.

Finally, in Vol. 4, number 12, on page five, we announced the victory of the Manitoba NDP in *Labor Challenge*. This was a factual article that showed the very real gains made in the election. In the context of the previous coverage the reader must conclude that *Labor Challenge* was not intervening to help the NDP but only to make the record for the future when, as Gandal put it, "they will see we are right."

Also, in conformity with one of Gandal's strictures, the article made a "graphic running commentary" on the inadequacy of the NDP's campaign by stating: "The NDP campaign was built solely around the selling of the premier's personality, presenting Schreyer as a veritable miracle-man. As such it did nothing to build the confidence of the working class base of the NDP in its own power."

Ironically, at the end of the article, *LC* let **Schreyer himself** sum up the real issue of the election. *LC* quoted him, without any comment at all, as saying: "We are taking on those who really control the wealth and the destiny of our nation. But if we are really determined, we can beat money any day of the week." Did this reflect a campaign built solely around "the premier's personality" or one that does "nothing to build the confidence of the working class base"?

THE CASE OF THE RAILWAY STRIKE

In dealing with the Women's Ministry, *Labor Challenge's* disorientation on our traditional approach to the NDP revealed a general unhinging. Its approach to the NDP so deteriorated that it wound up unable to even deal **truthfully** with the railway strike.

Labor Challenge's critical rejection of the NDP came to full flower in its coverage of the railway strike. This was certainly one of the most important

labor battles of the entire year to which appropriately *Labor Challenge* allocated considerable space and prominence. The editors' magnification of the bankruptcy of the NDP leadership led *Labor Challenge* into a unique and devastatingly false position. Assuming that the comrades did their job and read Hansard and the bourgeois press, we can only conclude from this coverage that the editors have become completely blinded by their hatred for the NDP leadership and so contemptuous of illusions about parliament, that they have distorted their reporting to the point of exposing themselves to a charge of lying.

On page one of Vol. 4, number 15, *Labor Challenge* claimed: "Lewis and NDP MPs failed to oppose parliamentary strikebreaking" On page two: "Instead of taking a clear, principled stand which could have educated many workers, the NDP joined the haggling over the terms under which the rail workers' strike would be broken" On page three: "the NDP has offered no support to the rail unions . . . its parliamentary representatives have supported the strike breaking moves of the Liberals." *LC* went on to say that the NDP "endorsed the imposed wage settlement in the rail strike"

What really happened? The NDP fought against this legislation and for the demands of the rail unions. What everyone but *Labor Challenge*, knows was reported everywhere. Even *Labor Action*, the publication of the Canadian Lambertists (*an international Trotskyist current with small forces in Canada—ed*), which thought the NDP opposition "half hearted and timid," reported that "in reversal of the role it played in the last rail strike the NDP opposed the bill sending the rail workers back . . . the mounting attack on the trade union leaderships . . . made it mandatory that the NDP oppose this piece of strikebreaking legislation."

The NDP opposed the bill in principle. They fought against legislative intervention in the strike and voted against it with the support of one Tory MP. After the defeat of this position they put forward a motion to amend the bill which would raise the level of the base wage increase to the last negotiating figure of the union. They lost the vote. They then supported a Conservative Party amendment which was to raise the base wage increase to a point between the union's position and the Liberal government's. This was defeated. They then reaffirmed their principled opposition to the bill and voted against it.

What should *Labor Challenge* have said in the context of our strategic orientation to the NDP? In the past, we would have directed ourselves to the main class question and thus the truth of that debate, instead of searching for some way to attack the NDP leadership at all costs and on all occasions. We would have told the simple truth and brought that to the attention of the working people of Canada. We would have taken

advantage of the NDP speeches, some of which were good, to deepen the resistance of the class to compulsory arbitration. We would have demonstrated this debate was further proof of the need for independent labor political action and called on workers to participate in the NDP.

Instead, *Labor Challenge* stooped to falsify the NDP's position and hid behind the demagoguery of Liberal Jean Marchand. This is the same Marchand who is known throughout the left, particularly in Quebec, as a notorious renegade because of his defection from the post of leader of the CNTU (*the second largest trade union federation in Quebec –ed.*) to become a Liberal cabinet minister. *Labor Challenge* went so far as to write that "Transport Minister Jean Marchand scored a telling point against the NDP . . ." In this case, the telling point that we commended Marchand for saying is "If the NDP had really taken a socialist attitude they would have been opposed to any kind of settlement legislated by this House, regardless of public opinion." It is incomprehensible that we would quote, approvingly, a labor renegade to the bourgeoisie against the labor party leadership. It indicates that *LC* has abandoned the distinction between the two. It also indicates that we are no longer talking to workers who have loyalty to their labor party and who would charge us with the responsibility to expose Marchand for the rat he is.

Marchand used ultra-left demagoguery about how real socialists would have proceeded – "regardless of public opinion." What is implicit in this "telling point"?

Should the NDP have boycotted the debate? Should the NDP parliamentarians have abrogated their duty to fight for the highest minimum level as the starting point for the wage negotiations that were going to continue? Do *Labor Challenge*'s editors think that parliament is not an arena for negotiation with the Liberal government, employer of the workers in the nationalized CNR? And let us not forget the NDP **opposed the bill in principle as well**. How do the editors think the caucus should have proceeded? They don't say. They just let Marchand make the "telling point" that they have not "really taken a socialist attitude . . ." as if anything at all is useful to attack the NDP with.

Our position of unconditional and critical support would have left plenty of room to attack Lewis's speech to the Parliament Hill demonstration. We could have had a very educational article on the need for extra-parliamentary struggle and the brass's uneasiness about it. As a matter of fact, if we had begun by recognizing the basic **correctness** of the NDP in this debate we could have put forward any valid criticisms. The telling point is that there wasn't enough for *Labor Challenge* to criticize so it distorted reality, thus making *Labor Challenge* unique as a left paper because it proceeded from what didn't happen.

In Vol. 4, number 16, there was a curious ambivalence in the article on page 9 of this issue where we discussed the return to work with a union militant. We didn't recommend defiance but, in the lead of the article, we quoted Louis Laberge (*then president of Quebec's largest union federation, QFL-CLC*) as saying that, if he were president of the CLC, he would have recommended the workers not to return. "If a law is unjust, I would fight it no matter what the cost."

The fact that we did not comment on Laberge's statement implies that we were supporting defiance. But given the heavy penalties for defying the legislation and the conjuncture of the ebbing militancy of the strikers, combined with deterioration of general public support, such a position would have been adventurist.

The interview that followed was with a very class conscious militant who was a member of one of the last locals to go back to work. He pointed out some of the very real gains of the strike in the breakdown of the traditional barriers among the rail workers who are in many separate craft unions, and the growth of consciousness of the necessity for one industrial, perhaps Canadian, union. He indicated that there were now new possibilities to fight the conservative union brass .

He told of one of the meetings in the Vancouver area where strikers passed a resolution calling on the CLC, the BC Federation of Labor, and the Vancouver Labor Council to organize mass rallies in support of their right to strike. He said "we hoped by the resolution to legitimize the intervention of trade unionists in other parts of the country. But it was never picked up by any significant forces . . . Therefore the only responsible action we could recommend to the members, (and the council did this) was that they return to work."

Do we think Lewis should have acted differently? Should he have publicly split with the trade union leadership and urged railway workers to defy the legislation? What were **we** recommending? What position did **we** have, hiding behind the romantic rhetoric of Laberge's statement? Did we think that the class, whom we are supposed to be writing to, was surging to break past the leaders of their movements? If that were so, the leadership's conservatism would be a betrayal. We would have been right to judge their defaults as if they were positive acts. But it was not so.

We should have been writing careful, positive articles about the potentials revealed in these class battles. At this stage of development, it is our **support** of the class struggles and organizations that is the main bridge to the workers' consciousness – not the criticisms of their, as yet un-discredited, leadership. This leadership will be discredited

by events, not irresponsible attacks. Instead of making the reformist leaders the main target of our attack, we should have struck first and foremost against the bosses and their political stooges!

THE MACK-ADDISON EXPULSIONS

Another indicator of the change in our orientation to the NDP was *LC*'s treatment of the Mack-Addison expulsions (Vol.4, No.16). The first thing we must note is that in the framework of "long range fraction work with a no-split perspective," it was either just a foolish act or a provocation to ask the New Democrat to accept an ad from *Labor Challenge*. **The LSA and its press are proscribed in the NDP.** We have fought that proscription as supporters and members of the NDP but the reality of the struggle at that time dictated a defensive posture on the part of socialist militants in the labor party. The only justification for such an aggressive request would be that we are attempting to expose the NDP brass as being opposed to having socialists in the party. Of course they are. Didn't they just expel the Waffle? Have they not got a long record of expelling Trotskyists? Was there some viable force within the NDP that we are seeking to rally and educate by having them reject our ad? Did *Labor Challenge* have a large NDP readership that we hoped would be angered and therefore join with us to increase the circulation of our paper? Why did we do it?

To find a sensible answer we have to drop our strategic and long range orientation which would make us consider such questions and turn to the needs we would feel if we had a position of treating the NDP as an opponent political organization which we were forced to expose at every opportunity – even when we had to provoke the opportunity. We would be searching for the chance to do what Gandal and the RCT said in their NDP document. As they see our purpose, it is that "our press and cadre **always** should emphasize that the NDP exists to repress and betray the class struggle and to rationalize the capitalist system" (emphasis added). "It (the NDP) is just in the way – plain and simple." ("The NDP is **in** the way, and **on** the way" previously being an iconic LSA phrase –ed.)

Or if not, let's assume that it was all a mistake and the comrades somehow thought that the ad would be accepted. Let's assume that they overlooked the fact that the sample copy they sent to the NDP contained the political resolution with the sharpest formulation of our difference with the program of the party and their leadership.

Imagine our chagrin when we discovered that we had given the NDP brass a fortuitous opportunity to expel more comrades and deepen the prejudice that exists against us in the party. But it won't work much further. The way *Labor Challenge* replied to Vichert (then NDP

Provincial Secretary) was in the framework of deepening our differentiation from the NDP.

We **do** have a tradition of how we defend our right to be in the NDP. We have always fought on the grounds that emphasize what we as socialists have in common with the NDP as a labor party. We have always pointed out how we are the best defenders and builders of the labor party. We have always refused to let the leadership sidetrack the argument into the question of incompatible ideologies. Recognizing the level of development of the consciousness of the working class at this time, and the brass's very real mandate to lead the party, we have always argued for our right to be in the party on the basis of our work and the concrete necessity for the NDP to follow socialist policies. When they have tried to make it a discussion of reform versus revolution, we have countered with our defensive demands that they implement the socialist positions adopted at conventions. In this way we aimed to mobilize the democratic sentiments of the rank and file behind us.

We have always taken special care to circumvent the prejudice in the ranks of the NDP against dual party structures. During the formation of the NDP we posed the concept of a federated structure, with ourselves as a legitimate part of the NDP. We have always defended ourselves as a legitimate socialist wing in and of the NDP – never as a counter-party within the party, with a tactical adaptation to that party.

So it is difficult to even imagine our line in *Labor Challenge* (volume 4, number 16). But there it is. They proudly published the whole of Vichert's letter that substantiates that ours is only a tactical adaptation and we are thus not truly supporters of the NDP.

But that is small potatoes in relation to the convention resolution *Labor Challenge* handed Vichert to use against us. And *Labor Challenge* welcomed the argument on his grounds. It used this expulsion as a chance to do propaganda for the Leninist party and the revolutionary road to socialism. As Vichert said in his letter, "I would be grateful if you would give this letter as much publicity as you can." Well, we sure are obliging, and he must have been doubly grateful that we hastened to validate his contention that we have a "point of view which is in fundamental opposition to the democratic socialism of the NDP."

That our strategic orientation had been abandoned for a tactic of fundamental criticism, sugar-coated with abstract support is underscored by the fact that the LSA made no appeal against these expulsions to the ranks of the party – in astonishing contrast to all our previous responses.

Ironically, the only place in which an appeal was made was in the November '73 issue of *Liberation* (journal of La Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière, Quebec homologue of the LSA) which is circulated primarily in Quebec where the NDP has almost no base.

Labor Challenge ended its article with the concept that we intended to fight on (illegally? subversively?) because, despite its program, its leadership and its structure, "to the degree that the NDP is rooted in the class struggle, rank and file militant currents will inevitably emerge to contest the class collaborationist course of the leadership." This prose conforms all too well to the Gandal-RCT line on the "revolutionary" approach to expulsions. We will have to forgive any present militants who might conclude that they would have to know how to do a better job than we! But it is probably better they consider us inept than sectarian. Truly a Hobson's choice, and inexcusable given our understanding of the problem and our wealth of experience in dealing with it.

YOUNG/RIDDELL REPLY ON LSA-LSO RECORD

On the very eve of our convention the IEC Majority Tendency thrust into the international discussion a document that assailed the LSA/LSO on a whole series of fronts of its work. This document, authored by Germain and titled "In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International," focused first and foremost on our position on the NDP. The IEC Majority Tendency charged that "the position which the LSA/LSO leadership has adopted towards the reformist social-democratic party, the NDP . . . expresses a clear tailist deviation from Leninism."

Germain has been familiar with the work of the Canadian section for a long time. Now, for the first time, he charges the Canadian section with deviationism. According to Germain, the position that the Labor Party Tendency is challenging the central office leadership with abandoning has all along been a "tailist deviation from Leninism." "Tailism" was the word that the RCT pinned on the orientation that was outlined in the 1970 document, *Our Orientation to the NDP; the Strategy and its Tactical Application*, over a year ago.

While the Political Committee Majority did not defend the LSA/LSO from this charge in the pre-convention and convention discussion, and certainly did not do so with the generalities of the Political Resolution, Comrades Young and Riddell have now attempted such a defence in their reply to Germain titled "The Real Record of the Canadian Section: in reply to Comrade Germain."

Thus we have two important pieces of documented evidence to examine: (1) our press, and whether a series of articles in their totality constitute an abandonment of our longstanding orientation, and (2) the Young/Riddell contribution and whether it actually is a defence of our longstanding orientation.

We have not dealt with the work of the movement, largely for two reasons: (1) with the defection of the Waffle, our work in the NDP has suffered a tremendous setback; and (2) such an analysis would rest to a considerable degree on an interpretation of events about which there is little documentary evidence. We do not, for instance, evaluate the dispute over our experience with the Red Circle in the Ontario NDP. Nor do we deal with the controversies over our line at the BC federal convention. To do so, we would have to resort to interpreting impressions and recollections that this or that comrade has of those interesting and highly relevant experiences. We are passing them by in favor of documented evidence, more or less available to everyone, showing the abandonment of our line and practice.

Germain's document "In Defence of Leninism: in defence of the Fourth International" is one of the most important documents in the discussion taking place throughout the world-wide Trotskyist movement. It is of particular importance to Canadian Trotskyists, not only because it singles out their organization and its central orientation for attack, but because it inevitably casts a pall over and discredits a most significant contribution that the LSA/LSO has made to the international discussion on party building - particularly in those countries where our sections are small and relatively isolated while confronted with the challenge of a mass labor party formation. We are referring to the contribution that we submitted to this international discussion over two years ago, the document *Our Orientation to the NDP; the Strategy and its Tactical Application*. This was the sole Canadian contribution to the international discussion until the recent Young/Riddell contribution and appeared in International Information Bulletin No.6 in 1971 (November 1971).

If today, with their continental guerrilla warfare strategy, leading elements in the IEC Majority Tendency can be said to be adapting to ultra-leftist pressures in the new radicalization, this cannot be said to have always been their tendency. For many years they were practitioners of "entry *sui generis*" which led in many countries, particularly in Belgium where Germain played the leading role, to adaptationism, even liquidationism, into social-democratic formations of the most classic type. This policy was terminated only by earth-shaking events – the rise of the new youth

radicalisation, its explosion in the French struggles of May-June 1968, and the flood of new and militant forces into our debilitated ranks.

TWO AIMS TO GERMAIN'S ATTACK

Thus the Germain document serves two key purposes. First, it diverts the attention of the world movement from the IEC Majority Tendency's adaptationism to ultra-leftist pressures in the new radicalisation. It distracts the world movement from the IEC Majority's failure to make a serious evaluation and allow the world movement to assimilate the lessons of the disasters that their adaptationism has brought us, particularly in Bolivia and Argentina. The Germain document does this by raising the bogey of adaptationism to reformist social democracy, of tailist deviationism from Leninism by at least two Trotskyist formations supporting the Lenin-Trotsky Faction.

Secondly, the Germain document attempts to dismiss any serious evaluation by the world movement of the significant contribution of Canadian Trotskyism on how to cope with a mass labor party formation and win revolutionary cadres on a principled basis to Trotskyism and the Fourth International. It tries to bury the principled experience of the Canadian Trotskyist movement which stands in such direct counterposition to the liquidationist experiences of important parts of the European cadre extending over the 1950's and into the 1960's. It attempts to do so by smearing the Canadian Trotskyist experience as being in effect a violation of Leninist-Trotskyist principles.

Comrade Germain is a longstanding leader of the world movement with years of detailed and first-hand experience with the Canadian section and its leadership. He is well acquainted with the orientation of the Canadian movement to the NDP labor party formation and its experiences in carrying out that orientation. Up until this damning and sweeping attack on our orientation to the NDP, Germain and his co-thinkers have not so much as **uttered a word of criticism** of this central aspect of the Canadian section's work. With this contribution however, Germain frontally attacks that

orientation now in operation since the formation of the NDP in 1961 and almost a decade before that with its predecessor, the CCF.

There can be no misunderstanding. Germain's attack is not on this or that incident or possible misapplication of our orientation on certain occasions. It is an attack from the point of view of principle, on the orientation itself. This is of course quite understandable in the light of the IEC Majority's support of the RCT right up until it split from the Canadian section and aligned with the Revolutionary Marxist Group.

According to Germain, "the position that the LSA/LSO (Canadian section) leadership — staunch supporter of the minority position on Latin America — has adopted towards the reformist social-democratic party, the NDP, in its country, and its position on the October 30, 1972 general elections in Canada in particular, expresses a clear tailist deviation from Leninism." The paragraphs following this statement outline the particular evidence — extensive quotes from a leaflet published by the YS-LJS, and an editorial from *Labor Challenge*. They are offered as proof of the general charge that our position on the NDP is tailist.

To make it crystal clear that he is not merely attacking inadequacies in a couple of the many articles that appear in the Canadian Trotskyist press on the NDP, Germain quickly moves off these extensive quotes, as if what he says about them is self-evident. For our part, we would note in passing that one of the pieces of evidence, the YS/LJS leaflet, is a competent presentation of our orientation and the other, the LC editorial is a violation of it.

Germain continues for several paragraphs to give his view of the character of the NDP, its leadership and its role in the class struggle, and contrasts several sentences and phrases from the quoted articles with what he considers to be Leninist concepts. He continues with several quotations from "Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder," which he counterposes to the position of the Canadian Trotskyist movement.

The Young/Riddell reply, appearing in Volume X No. 16 of the International Internal Bulletin, attempts to come to grips with Germain's scatter-gun blast at a whole number of positions of the Canadian Trotskyists. Our comments

in this contribution will be limited to Germain's attack on our orientation to the NDP and Young and Riddell's comments on that position.

How do Comrades Young and Riddell defend the Canadian Trotskyist movement from the attack launched by Germain against the position it "has adopted towards the reformist social democratic party, the NDP" which he charges "expresses a clear tailist deviation from Leninism"?

After noting that Germain makes a long series of criticisms of the two items he quotes, they separate two central points. The two central points that they filter out of Germain's criticisms are: first, that the passages he refers to that argue support of the NDP in elections do not advance a revolutionary critique of the social-democratic leadership of the NDP, and second, that the passages argue that an NDP victory would propel the class struggle forward. This latter projection Young/Riddell add "is by no means guaranteed in advance."

YOUNG/RIDDELL TAKE EVASIVE ACTION

"There is no question that these criticisms are absolutely correct. A number of formulations in the passages are erroneous," concede Young and Riddell. After making such an admission they challenge Germain with the responsibility of having "to round out his criticisms of these two passages by noting that such erroneous formulations contrast with the correct line carried by the LSA/LSO in its convention resolutions and its publications as a whole, before he leaped to a sweeping conclusion."

What has Germain failed to note? In particular they bring to his attention a peculiar incident covered in *Labor Challenge* which we commented on earlier in this document as an example of how our line has changed — the Mack/Addison expulsions (*from the NDP —ed.*) A more suspicious mind than our own, seeing how extremely fortuitous this incident proves to be for the Young/Riddell line of argument, might suspect that it was actually set up to order.

Young/Riddell triumphantly point to this attack on our movement by the provincial secretary of the Ontario NDP — "one of the leaders whom the LSA/LSO is accused (by Germain) of supporting uncritically."

The reader will recall that the editor of our press, proscribed by the Ontario NDP leadership some years back, sent what Young/Riddell describe as a "routine request for advertising space in the NDP newspaper." The NDP provincial secretary noted in his reply, which for some reason we published **in toto** in *Labor Challenge*, that he was not, as to be expected, accepting "any advertising for the *New Democrat* which is contrary to the policies and traditions of the party". This portion of the letter is left out of the version appearing in the international bulletin, although there would appear to be no space problem.

For some unexplained reason, along with the letter requesting advertising space for our proscribed paper, which is quite well known to the NDP leadership, we enclosed a copy. It just happened to be the issue which reproduced that portion of our political resolution which detailed, as Marxist-Leninists, our fundamental and principled opposition to the NDP as a "social democratic labor party".

This — what Young/Riddell describe as a "routine request for advertising space in the NDP newspaper" — was not sent in the name of our paper's business manager but for some reason by our new editor who is well known to the NDP provincial secretary as a leading public figure in the anti-war movement and a member of the NDP. The result of this "routine request" handled in such a "routine" way was the expulsion of our new editor.

How could Germain "miss the clear line of revolutionary criticism of the NDP in *Labor Challenge* which so annoyed" the Ontario NDP provincial secretary, Young/Riddell ask? "Is it because the paragraph in *Labor Challenge* quoted by Vlchert," from the political resolution, they ask, "reflects some change in line by the LSA/LSO?" The Political Resolution, presented in a routine way to the LSA convention is given special weight in the Young/Riddell argument. A little further down, they refer to the political resolution as "an up-to-date and authoritative statement of the LSA/ LSO

leadership's policy." Having conceded the correctness of the criticisms Germain made of two items, they present other items which they say carry the correct line, preceding this evidence with the statement: "Nor did the Political Resolution add anything new to the public positions of Canadian Trotskyism in this respect. . ."

But before proceeding along this line, perhaps we should examine more closely the actual evidence presented by Germain which he alleges proves our movement has a position on the NDP which is "a clear tailist deviation from Leninism." The simple fact that Young and Riddell plead guilty on our behalf should not cause us to automatically accept that plea. Neither of the offending items, the YS leaflet nor the *Labor Challenge* article was written by them. We are all familiar with capitalist institutions that plead guilty to minor infractions in order to get off, to cover up major crimes. Does this hasty plea have bigger implications than would first meet the eye?

According to Young/Riddell "there is no question that these criticisms are absolutely correct. . ." that the passages Germain refers to in the YS leaflet and the *Labor Challenge* article, "do not advance a revolutionary critique of the social democratic leadership of the NDP...."

THE YOUNG SOCIALIST'S LEAFLET

The first matter we will examine is the leaflet which our youth comrades carried into the most dynamic, although the most politically inexperienced sector of the radicalization. It is addressed in particular to the 2.8 million youth who had the vote for the first time in that election.

Is the YS leaflet an obvious aberration of our line? Does it contain a number of erroneous formulations which could be said to add up to a violation of our longstanding orientation to the NDP? In the case of the *Labor Challenge* article, Young and Riddell take pains to say that the editorial board recognized it as faulty and corrected it in the next issue. But in the case of the YS leaflet we are not given even the slightest suggestion as to what is wrong with it.

Young and Riddell plead guilty on behalf of the LSA – in this case on behalf of the Young Socialists. Thus we are all to conclude that the YS leaflet is a violation of our NDP orientation, or at the very least (not explained to us) that it is not a worthy example of the implementation of our orientation.

Is there any truth at all in Germain's charge that the YS leaflet abstains from revolutionary propaganda against the NDP leadership? Does it present a line that even implies that a fundamental change, that a break from capitalism as a system can be realized by the masses through an electoral victory of the NDP? We of the LPT - Labor Party Tendency – completely deny this. We think that it is a good, competent and generally correct implementation of our orientation. And on behalf of the YS and the Canadian Trotskyist movement, we reverse the Young/Riddell plea to Germain's charge, to **not** guilty.

That is not to say that there are no errors in it, or that it could not be improved. For instance we would have asked the YS to consider editing out the word "our" party in reference to the NDP in the sixth paragraph quoted by Germain. But even there a good defence could be marshalled for its retention. For as the leaflet points out, the Young Socialists "are the only active youth movement that supports the NDP." And as the Political Resolution states, "the NDP is the political expression of the political consciousness of the working class. . . and. . . poses to the class the need of replacing the government of the capitalists with a workers' government." There is even some tactical advantage for the independent YS, in the absence of an official NDP youth movement, to talk of the NDP as "our party". All the more is this so, we might add, when the tiny Canadian Trotskyist movement, confronted with the massive New Democratic Party, quite correctly calls its organization a league, and not a party.

GERMAIN'S SLIGHT OMISSION

In the quite normal desire to defend our movement and our orientation to the NDP from Germain's assault, we took the trouble to look up the YS leaflet. Germain's quotation from the leaflet includes a section that reads: "the NDP

has limitations. Its conservative leadership wants to reform this profit system, not end it. The leadership also sees the parliamentary road as the only road for change, and they sometimes even oppose demonstrations, mass meetings and strikes, etc . . . " It was this, along with other sections of the leaflet that caused Germain to say that the *Labor Challenge* article is even more guilty of his charge than the YS leaflet. But Germain suddenly ends his quotation from the leaflet **before** the following:

"That's what the Young Socialists is all about. We are the only active youth movement that supports the NDP. And we're out to organize a movement of thousands of youth who are fighting for a better world 365 days of a year, inside and outside the NDP, and determined to use any means necessary, not just elections . . . We're serious about changing the world. And we know that it will take nothing short of a socialist revolution – a complete restructuring of society – to end the injustice, irrationality and brutality of this system. Because it is building the independent power of the oppressed, the campaign to elect the NDP is part of that process. The struggle for change takes a lot of effort and a lot of people. But the future of all of us rests upon it. We need your help. If you think we are right in what we're doing, you should join us. Join us in campaigning for an NDP government. Join us in fighting for a socialist world."

The constant repetition of "us" refers of course, not to the NDP, but to the Canadian Trotskyist youth organization, the Young Socialists. The back page of the leaflet contains a YS membership application form, a list of all the addresses of YS locals and an advertisement and subscription form for the *Young Socialist* and *Labor Challenge*.

In our opinion this leaflet, directed to the youth of Canada, particularly to the 2.8 million who for the first time had the vote, and not solely to the vanguard and what it considers to be its particular concerns apart from the problem of mobilizing the class, is a competent one. Within the space available, it is quite clear on the crisis of leadership, on parliamentarism, and electoralism, and projects our orientation to the NDP with considerable skill.

Since an examination of the leaflet, even without the part that Germain unfortunately omitted, proves the utter falseness of his charge, we must turn to Young and Riddell and ask them, why they pleaded guilty on our behalf. They must tell us what is wrong with this leaflet, not with just a word here or there but what is wrong with it in substance. What criticisms made by Germain are "absolutely correct!" What formulations, in the passages, even those quoted by Germain, are erroneous?

Germain characterizes the portion of the YS leaflet he quotes as "astonishing prose" before he proceeds to deal with his quotation from *Labor Challenge*. He does not elucidate what he means by the word "astonishing", as if it is obvious. But he does go to the trouble of italicizing three sentences to bring them to our attention.

The paragraph preceding the start of his quote had a subhead "Who Will Rule Canada." The paragraph within the quote, prior to the italicized section had a subhead "The Corporations . . . " And the italicized section had a subhead: ". . . or us!" Thus the leaflet attempts to pose the class question, the various struggles of the working class and the role the various parties play in these struggles.

The three sentences that Germain calls to our special attention read:

"The NDP can propel them forward. An NDP victory would inspire and intensify the different movements of the oppressed. A Labor government could win concrete gains for the working people and open the way for fundamental social change."

To Germain's charge and to Young and Riddell's plea of guilty, we must reply, that not only the rest of the YS leaflet but these three sentences too, are by no means an aberration in the application by the YS or the LSA of our longstanding orientation to the NDP. Quite the contrary. The leaflet is a competent application of our basic orientation to the NDP. In his selection of this particular YS leaflet Germain has by no means taken unfair advantage. He has not, by chance, hit us at some weak spot. Quite the contrary. He has hit at our orientation —squarely!

BEHIND THE DISAVOWAL OF THE YS LEAFLET

If, as we claim, the YS leaflet does generally correctly articulate our orientation, Young and Riddell as spokesmen of the LSA are required to defend it.

If it does not, they are required to explain how it does not articulate our line, and perhaps even more important, why this could happen. Of course, there is another possible explanation that lurks behind an acceptance of Germain's criticism. That is, that in the intervening time Young and Riddell have come to agree that there is some basic weakness in our orientation, which has certainly been under an unprecedented attack on all fronts. But of course, if that were so they should say so openly, not indulge in self-criticism, but to help the movement correct or even change its orientation.

As for Germain's criticism of the *Labor Challenge* article of September 27, 1972, we concur with one aspect of his criticism – that this article "doesn't contain a single word of criticism of reformism and electoralism, not a single word of differentiation from social democracy." This is so much the worse, as some comrades now in the Labor Party Tendency pointed out at the time, when you know that the NDP brass had just driven the left wing Waffle out of the ranks of the party.

Young and Riddell immediately accept this criticism and rapidly move off this article to point to other articles — two in the August 21st issue, another in the September 25th issue and another in an October issue, to demonstrate that the September 27 article was just an inexplicable error.

Germain recognizes that the error is such an obvious one that it must be "A-B-C for the leadership of the LSA as well." "Why then," he continues, "do they write the exact opposite to what they believe on these questions?" Young and Riddell do not answer this question. They plead guilty to his charge, and so they too pass off the error as an inexplicable one.

However that error, and a series of the same kind of errors were committed in the period when the Waffle left wing was headed out of the NDP and we were under increasing ultra-left pressure from the Red Circle and the RCT.

As we noted previously, Harry Knight in Bulletin 54 outlined the PC majority's record of zig-zags and adaptations "both to the left and the right". This "zig" that Germain picked up in order to attack our orientation, as Knight pointed out, was a "by-product of the PC majority's mission against the Waffle 's supposed cop-out on socialism. . . "As Knight points out "the euphoric lapses in our press, the muting of our criticism of the NDP leadership. . . cannot be explained in any other context."

This question disappears under the rug and Young and Riddell sweep on, ignoring the emphasis that Germain makes of certain sentences in the *Labor Challenge* editorial. Germain singles out these sentences as additional proof that the LSA/LSO's position is a "clear tailist deviation from Leninism."

One sentence reads: "but the election of NDP governments to power constitutes big strides in the path that the working class of this country are going to take **towards breaking not only from the capitalist electoral politics but from capitalism as a system.**" (Germain' s emphasis.)

The other sentence that Germain brings to our attention reads: "Through the NDP the lessons of the radicalization amongst the youth, in the women's liberation movement, the lessons of the Quebec and Native libation struggles, are being transmitted to, discussed and debated among the advanced workers of the country. It is through the NDP that the political consciousness of the working class in Canada is being forged and shaped.

YOUNG-RIDDELL REPUDIATE OUR ORIENTATION

Young and Riddell concede that certain of Germain's criticisms are "absolutely correct". Do they include the criticisms of the italicized portions within this category of "absolutely correct"? And when Young and Riddell say that "the passages argue that an NDP victory would propel the class struggle forward which is by no means guaranteed in advance," are they referring to the italicized sections as well?

Germain's implied criticisms through the italicization of these sentences cannot be sloughed aside so lightly. These passages have nothing at all to do

with guarantees in advance. They express how we see the class struggle and through what forms we see it advancing over the next period in this country. They are a projection of an orientation. Furthermore, that is exactly how Germain takes them on, in his later comments. Where precisely, we must ask, do Young and Riddell stand on these italicized sections that Germain attacks? The LPT stands by them!

There is neither time nor space at this time to comment on the other aspects of Germain's attack on our orientation that immediately follows. We think, from the above comments, that it is quite clear that Young and Riddell have not defended our orientation as it has been established over the years. Quite the contrary. Their failure to do so, their headlong retreat before Germain's attack which is substantially the same as the attack by the RCT which they failed to answer, leads us to conclude that on the terms that we have always understood it, they think our NDP orientation is indefensible. One is led to conclude that they themselves have come to question that orientation and are now in the process of revising it to such an extent, as recent coverage in our press shows, that they have actually abandoned our orientation to the mass labor party.

We will now move on to that part of the Young-Riddell reply to Germain that is titled "II. Towards Discussing the Real Issues. Subsection I. Some starting Points for an NDP Debate". But first let us pause to get some perspective.

The previous sections of this document were developed within the framework of the common experience, understanding and implementation of our orientation to the CCF/NDP. This orientation commenced to find concrete expression over 20 years ago when the Trotskyist movement concluded that the CCF was a labor party formation (1948) and it moved towards making an entry into it (1952). This whole experience was tersely summed up in the document "Our Orientation to the NDP; The Strategy and its tactical application, (1970) now referred to by Young and Riddell for some unexplained reason as simply "Our Orientation to the NDP".

Our movement, like all other Canadian political bodies, has an orientation, and has positioned itself in relation to the CCF/NDP. Since 1952, Canadian Trotskyism has had what it has called a **strategic** orientation to the Canadian labor party formation, both during its CCF and its NDP phases. We have not conceived of it as a tactic, and the CCF/NDP just another work area, even if perhaps a more important one. This strategic or long range orientation has been the framework within which we have employed several widely differing tactics. These have included an entry, in the process of which we gave up our entire public face, including our press. These tactics, which have at one time seen us direct all the energies of our open organization and press to the CCF/NDP, and under different circumstances, saw us direct almost our entire energies outside of and independently of the CCF/NDP, were all worked out in the light of the varied concrete situations that confronted us and were all designed to build the Trotskyist movement.

We have made this longstanding strategic orientation of our movement the framework of our argument in this document, not because of any maudlin or sentimental attachment to our past but because it expresses the hard fought lessons of the past and is the promise of future gains. Of course it might be that recent developments have already proven the inadequacy of our previous concepts or are posing problems that some comrades may think are proving such an inadequacy. For instance the NDP is not only in office in the Prairie provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan but also in BC, and it is quite possible we will have a labor government in Ontario within the next three or four years. Although we should note that if this poses problems, they are not exactly new ones for us since the CCF was elected to office in Saskatchewan back in 1944. But perhaps we have been hewing to a strategy of some 20 years duration that is based on a false methodology that only now for some reason is becoming clear.

If, for whatever reason, Trotskyists come to think that previous longstanding central concepts of their movement are proving to be inadequate and needing to be developed, given new emphasis; or if they think they are proving to be wrong in life, they commence in a responsible way (above all to preserve what is useful from the past) to make whatever adjustments or changes may be necessary. They make this process an experience of the movement as a

whole. They don't do it behind the backs of the movement, but openly and above board. If differences commence over the use of terminology or formulations, they attempt to take it off this plane and to get to the very essence of the problem. They present an accurate picture of what our position has been, outline the error, and if it involves something substantial, for instance an error in theory, they attempt to trace it to its origin and draw it to its full conclusions. To do otherwise is to risk setting off a tremendous process of miss-education among the cadre.

In the summer and fall of 1972 some comrades, then in the United Tendency, noted what they considered to be zigzags and "adaptation both to the left and to the right," on the part of the Central Office leadership with regards to the NDP. Even more alarming, all during the pre-convention period in the face of the all-out assault on our NDP orientation, first by the Unified Minority Tendency and then by the Revolutionary Communist Tendency, the leadership remained silent. Following the convention some comrades began to develop an uneasy feeling that some articles on the NDP appearing in our press were not expressing our orientation. Shortly, in their opinion, these articles began to reveal a distinct trend, constituting in their totality an abandonment of our orientation.

After protesting about some of the articles Comrade R. Dowson asked the leadership to present a document to the movement developing their views on our NDP orientation. The Lambertists (*Trotskyist current outside the FI based in France with a small force in Canada –ed.*) were openly stating in their press, *Labor Action*, that the LSA had changed its line on the NDP. And ex-RCTers, now RMGers, were wryly commenting that the RCT line document on the NDP that had been rejected by the LSA-LSO convention was now the line being carried by *Labor Challenge*.

Some LSA-LSO Central Office leaders began to suggest that the 1970 document has some significant shortcomings, that there are terminological problems, and conceded that there were errors in this or that *Labor Challenge* article. But they denied that there was any pattern, and vigorously denied that they were changing our line on the NDP or were even intending

to do so. They asked Dowson to present a written detailed critique of the various contentious articles.

Dowson demurred. He said that he did not consider it his responsibility to ferret out and record a process that he considered to be transparently dear. He suggested that this would not be the proper way to proceed, particularly as it would put him, former Executive Secretary, against the leadership in the eyes of the movement. He proposed that the CO (*Central Office*) leadership, whatever the reason for not having done so before, should at long last present the now obviously needed document on the NDP. No moves were made to do so. The process continued in the pages of *Labor Challenge*, and a group of comrades decided to form the Labor Party Tendency.

Do we merely have a series of errors appearing in *Labor Challenge*, which show no pattern or direction, that should be brought to the attention of the editorial board for rectification? And do we merely have the dropping of a number of words and phrases that have nothing to do with the essence of our orientation, and should be cleaned up? Quite the contrary! We think it obvious from the limited amount of material that we have noted and commented upon here in this document that *Labor Challenge* articles show a clear trend towards a sectarian revision of our longstanding strategic orientation and in their totality constitute an abandonment of our orientation to the mass labor party. The elimination of a whole series of words, phrases, formulations that we have heretofore used to describe and define our orientation, particularly in the 1970 document, reflect and express a change in the content, the essence of our longstanding orientation to the NDP.

The above material could be said to fall in the category of circumstantial evidence of a change in line. Aside from the Political Resolution which we have shown to be largely irrelevant in this respect, there has been no documentary expression of the recent thinking of the CO leadership. But now we have before us a document authored by Comrades Young and Riddell, "The Real Record of the Canadian Section — In reply to Comrade Germain," and in particular that section of the document titled "Some Starting Points for an NDP Debate."

At first glance the title "Some Starting Points for an NDP Debate" is puzzling. One would anticipate that our reply would be a clear and precise outline and defence of our longstanding position on the CCF/NDP which Germain claims expresses a tailist deviation from Leninism, that it would develop our view of our orientation as expounded in the 1970 convention document *Our Orientation to the NDP; the Strategy and its Tactical Application*. After all, it is that document that the RCT specifically assailed and which is of particular concern to Germain and the International since it is our contribution to the international discussion on entry *sui generis*. Why don't we start from there?

One would expect a title more along the line of "Tailism or Revolutionary Intervention – more on Canadian Trotskyist Practice." But it turns out upon examination that the Young/Riddell contribution is more or less correctly titled. It is certainly not an explanation and defence of the LSA/LSO's orientation to the NDP.

This section of the document is truly and quite uniquely a contribution of Comrades Young and Riddell for it addresses itself to our orientation in such a way as has never, up until October 1973 (its date of publication) been discussed on any official level of the Canadian movement with the possible exception of the Political Bureau. At long last we have some configurations, some sketchy outlines of the thinking of some leading comrades – the Executive Secretary and the Organizational Secretary of the LSA-LSO. They appear for the first time, not in a bulletin of the LSA/LSO, not in a discussion on any level of the Canadian movement, but in the final days of a hectic discussion preparatory to the world congress in an international discussion bulletin, and thus with a highly official status as the Canadian movement's views.

This section of the Young/Riddell contribution starts off from certain basic fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism as to the essential nature of social democracy and reformism. It touches on the treacherous role of social democracy as an ideological force – as a transmission belt for bourgeois ideology. As an organisational force it puts social democracy in **historic** terms, as "detour for the English Canadian working class", not an unuseful

metaphor since all contemporary history proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that a revolutionary vanguard party is a life and death matter and must be built as best possible now!

It is often good to go back to basic principles, to be constantly alerted to the danger of adaptationism and tailism that confronts Trotskyists, particularly where there is a labor party formation which because of its centrality in the radicalization, figures large in their work to build the revolutionary vanguard party.

However, it is not clear as to their relevancy in what Young and Riddell call "an NDP debate" that they initiate with this section. As such, it is certainly not involved in the debate that we have had with the Revolutionary Communist Tendency and its line document authored by Gandal, except in the most indirect way. The RCT was particularly strong in emphasizing these basic fundamentals. In fact they accused the LSA/LSO, in the process of what they alleged to be a liquidationist approach to the NDP, of being led to some serious theoretical revisions of these very first principles. However, in our opinion the problem was the other way around — not at all unexpected when revolutionary socialists are generally isolated from the class and under heavy ultra-left pressure. With the RCT these first principles, these formulations, tended to substitute for a real, a specific appraisal of the NDP as an expression of social democracy. Failing that, they proved unable to arrive at a correct orientation to it.

In fact we can say that ignorance of these basic Marxist-Leninist concepts is not the problem with our opponents on the left. The problem with the Maoists, the CP, and now even with some important forces in the Waffle, is not their unfamiliarity with, or ignorance of the historic role of reformism and social democracy. Instead of demonstrating to the workers who are under the influence of the social democratic misleaders how (what we revolutionists know to be) first principles are being proven in life itself; instead of patiently proving in life itself the correctness of the theory, they have turned it into a dogma. It is this elevation of these concepts to the ethereal realm of dogma which has made it impossible for our opponents on

the left to take a correct position on the concrete expression of reformism – social democracy in Canada.

Nor does this approach appear, certainly at this time, to be very relevant in a debate with Germain. While it is sometimes a good tactic to draw out differences and to thereby warn of their inner logic, it also has the grave danger of covering over or confusing the real differences. It is hard to believe, certainly at this time, that Young and Riddell are serious when they question: "Comrade Germain expresses no opinion on whether the LSA-LSO is correct to utilize the tactic of critical support to the NDP."

The problem for the LSA-LSO, under the pressure of our opponents on the left, is to retain our dialectical definition of the NDP, our concrete appraisal of its internal dynamics and its role in the radicalization, to retain our active and not waiting policy, in a word our orientation to the NDP. What is at stake is not first principles but our orientation.

In the belief that it flows inevitably and logically from these first principles, the RCT took us into what is a counter-productive debate - and others have followed them into it - as to whether we Trotskyists of the independently structured LSA-LSO are opposed to the NDP or whether we support the NDP. Some comrades state that as a political organization we are opposed to the NDP, we are opposed, period, and no "ifs, "ands" or "buts."

This is a rather difficult concept to grasp since leading LSA activists favor and fight in union locals for affiliation to the NDP and from time to time LSA representatives call for the NDP's election to office, even egging it on to contest municipal office. It is all the more difficult to grasp in the light of our policy that all comrades who are able, hold membership in the NDP and, when it seems favorable, actively participate in it, even assuming posts in its provincial executive bodies.

Obviously such formulations are not adequate to present our stance to the NDP, and on closer examination that also holds for the concept that the NDP is a detour even historically. A detour eventually gets you to the same destination as the main road, in this case, we assume, the socialist revolution. But we know that the road of the revolutionary vanguard, the

road of class struggle, is the only road, and that social democracy (class collaboration) is not just a slower, round-about or circuitous route. If the NDP is only a detour, perhaps for some reason we might actually consider taking it. The problem is — it never arrives at the socialist revolution.

The first striking feature of the Young/Riddell document is that it is not placed within the framework of our orientation as it has heretofore been generally understood by our cadre. The concepts of our movement that present us as supporting the NDP as a political party, which has heretofore been the main emphasis of our orientation, are missing. All the words, the phrases and concepts that we have up until now employed to express our orientation are gone. The main slant of the Young-Riddell document is that the NDP is an obstacle and that the LSA-LSO opposes the NDP as a political party. Our concept of its role — we don't want to haggle over words but — as we expressed it in the 1970 document as being both "in the way and on the way" to the Canadian socialist revolution, is notably missing. Not only are the words gone but so is the concept.

From reading the Young/Riddell document one could not even say that the LSA-LSO has an orientation to the NDP in any meaning of the word, let alone what we have heretofore called a strategic or long range orientation to the NDP which expresses the organic nature of the ties between our tasks and the main political vehicle of rising class consciousness in Canada. They present our position as being merely one of a tactical attitude to the NDP.

Here is how they sum it up: "the present orientation of the LSA/LSO consists of critical support to the NDP as the mass political party of the English Canadian labor movement. It is not an entry into the NDP. It entails the work of a portion of LSA members (fraction work) inside the NDP, and an orientation of intervening in the politics of the NDP and the labor movement through independent activity outside the NDP; independent propaganda, independent mass campaigns on particular issues, and all the public activity of the LSA. Thus we intervene in the politics of the NDP both within the NDP, within the unions and from the outside.

The balance of the different sides of this work depends on the political conjuncture. Its aim is not to build a centrist or left centrist current in the NDP. Its aim is to increase the working class influence and build the cadres of the Canadian Trotskyist movement."

The presentation of our orientation by Riddell and Young while in some points more or less formally correct is really a caricature of our orientation in such gross outlines as to be scarcely attributable to the real thing.

Is it possible to describe our past and present relation to the NDP, since there has been no documentation to project a new relationship, unless we actually say we do have a new one, as being one of critical support? The position of critical support is the position of all currents of the left, with the possible exception of the Communist Party of Canada, (Marxist-Leninist). Our position has been one of a much more profound relation, one might even say identification with the NDP in every sense, in all our tactics.

Only three years ago, the 1970 document expressed it as "one of unconditional support and intensive fraction work with a non-split perspective." Our line has been not to run against the NDP in elections. Of course there have been exceptions, the last in Quebec where the NDP is no significant factor, but these exceptions only serve to prove the rule. When the NDP does not contest an election and we do, we generally identify our campaign with the need for independent labor political action, and so direct our campaign as to identify it in the public mind with the NDP.

If there is one aspect of Canadian Trotskyism that stands out in the minds of the forces of the left and differentiates us from our organized opponents on the left, it is our support of the NDP. So much is this a part of our movement that some comrades of the Labor Party Tendency thought that the LSA leadership, including Young and Riddell, went so far on a crucial occasion as to make a "fetish" of the NDP. At the time that the Waffle under the assault of the Lewis leadership was clearly moving outside of the ranks of the NDP in the direction of building an independent party, we drew a line of blood between ourselves and them around the demand "Stay In and Fight".

We do not want to haggle over words but in our opinion our 1970 document did not err in stating that our orientation was one of unconditional support of the NDP, and of course critical. It could not be understood to be anything else than critical since we sustain an independent organization and press which carries the full program of the proletarian revolution and identifies itself with the Fourth International. Alas, some comrades have found a dictionary that defines the word unconditional as "absolute". And of course, as Marxists, rejecting all absolutes, they now call this word into question. But there is no question at all about the main thrust of our orientation to the NDP. It has not been critical so much as it has laid down no conditions before the NDP that qualify our support of it as a political party for some 12 years now since it was founded.

It is true that our position vis-à-vis the NDP is not that of entry at this time, although we should keep it in mind that we may well enter the NDP in the future. But is it possible with any kind of exactitude to say as do Young and Riddell that our orientation "entails the work of a portion of the LSA (fraction work) inside the NDP." The fact is that all members of the LSA, except those who we know in advance would automatically be barred, are expected to automatically take out a membership in the NDP.

One could say with some justification that NDP membership is a condition of membership in the LSA and the YS. That it is not a formal condition of membership is due to the fact that the NDP is so central to all our work and propaganda, even during a period when we are doing little in the constituency organizations, that anyone coming around us and joining us cannot help but understand that they should hold membership in the NDP. Since formal identification with the LSA almost automatically brings expulsion from the NDP, the extent of public identification that a comrade may have with the LSA is a matter of some concern in the deployment of our forces – who speaks officially on behalf of the LSA, who sells our press and where, and with how much identification, etc., etc.

To say, as do Young and Riddell, that a portion of LSA members do fraction work in the NDP, is an incredible understatement. Revolutionary socialists, if they had the forces, would do fraction work in a great number of

organizations and movements, anywhere and any place where we might get a hearing, including church organizations. We have described our fraction work in the NDP in quite a different way than Young and Riddell now describe it. In the 1970 document we said we conduct "intensive fraction work with a non-split perspective" in the NDP. We do not want to haggle over words but in what way do these words, written only three years ago not accurately describe our orientation in this respect? We have no objection to trying to find other, better words to express it, but Young and Riddell's words give quite a false impression of our orientation to the NDP.

In our 1970 document we noted that for a whole period the youth radicalization unfolded outside of the NDP and was only indirectly reflected within it. Thus we noted that our 1966 resolution described the implementation of our orientation as follows: "It means that the NDP remains the focus of all our politics — but not the center of our activities." This remains a generally accurate formulation of our orientation.

To say that "we intervene in the politics of the NDP . . . within the unions" is formally correct, but it does not accurately explain that intervention. It could truthfully be said by opponents of the NDP, both its scattering of left opponents and it's still numerous right wing opponents, that the Trotskyists intervene as supporters of the NDP, even as the best, the most committed supporters of the concept of independent labor, NDP, political action.

Historically, as a social democratic party, the NDP is fated to betray the socialist revolution and thus the working class. Its future betrayal is clearly forecast in its present, making NDPers, as their experiences widen with the crisis of capitalism ever more open to recruitment to Trotskyism. However, in urging union affiliation, we of necessity have to emphasize good positions in the party program, including good positions taken by the party leadership now, reluctantly or not. We cannot limit ourselves to pie-in-the-sky abstract possibilities that this reformist party has, should the working class flood into the constituency associations and the union political education committees. How else could we carry an argument? It would be quite a feat to argue union affiliation to the NDP if besides its historic position being one of betrayal of the working class, its program, as now understood, and its

leadership, were now perceived as bankrupt by any sizeable, viable sector of the working masses. Then, it would indeed be tailism. Today, when the Liberals and Tories still have the adherence of the majority of the working class who concern themselves with politics, to support the NDP is in the framework of revolutionary socialist politics.

Within the NDP itself where our comrades seek to propagandize our transitional and democratic demands We attempt to build a left wing. During the 1966-68 period we were quite successful in gathering leftward moving NDPers around us on a basic minimum program. The Socialist Caucus had 30 to 40 delegates at the 1965 federal convention and its six point program was endorsed by, among others, the senior NDP M.P. Bert Herridge. The Ontario Socialist Caucus at the 1966 convention ran a slate of four candidates for the executive who received 20% of the vote – its candidate for party treasurer also won 20% of the vote. The 1968 Ontario convention Socialist Caucus meeting rallied up to 100 delegates and there were effective formations in both Alberta and BC.

We have described the program of such caucuses in which we played the leading role as being a class struggle program with a socialist perspective. Of course, as Young and Riddell state, our "aim is not to build a centrist or left centrist current in the NDP." That begs the question. We want a broad class struggle left wing within which we can move and where we can hope to find recruits for the proscribed LSA. What would such a left wing be if it were not "centrist or left centrist" at the very best? What we rejected in the debated with the Red Circle, and the RCT that agreed with them, was the idea of launching a struggle in the NDP designed to regroup what they call revolutionary elements around what they call an explicit, revolutionary program. Not because we are opposed in principle to raising our full program but because at best it would add almost nothing to the forces of the LSA already inside the NDP — it would be a regroupment of "Trotskyists", a pitifully small force struggling against a reformist machine for leadership of a mass labor party.

It is not at all clear what Young and Riddell mean when they say that our aim, that the aim of our tiny forces in the mass labor party formation, "is to

increase the working class influence," unless this is some kind of euphemism for increasing the influence of our Marxist program which alone expressed the interests of the working class. After all, the NDP is based on the working class and there is considerable working class weight in it, unfortunately — but it is a fact — by no means exercising a radical influence on NDP policy for some period now. No matter how you examine Young and Riddell's explanation of what they call "our present orientation," in this respect too it is by no means an accurate presentation of what it has been; and as a projection can only orient our forces.

The slogan "Win the NDP to Socialism" defended in our 1970 document came under heavy attack from the RCT. Its absence from Riddell's and Young's outline of "the present orientation of the LSA/LSO" could be due to a number of reasons. But it is quite clear that they do not defend it. It has already been pulled down from LSA halls and another substituted in its place: "Fight for socialist policies in the NDP."

Slogans are only approximations and often only express our views for a limited period. The slogan "Fight for socialist policies in the NDP" would appear to be much more in keeping with a tactical attitude to the NDP than what we have called our strategic orientation to the NDP. It is in keeping with a portion of LSA members doing fraction work with a short term split perspective, and not with all LSAers possible holding NDP membership and doing fraction work with a non-split perspective.

In the slogan "Fight for socialist policies in the NDP" could we not just as easily substitute for the letters NDP the name of almost any other organization in which we might have a portion of comrades doing fraction work? This latter slogan contains no concept of how the LSA as an independent and public expression of Trotskyism has always understood the centrality of the NDP to all its work. It gives no guidance to comrades working in the NDP and to persons who may be coming our way. Instead of posing a struggle for the leadership of the class against the liberal-reformist NDP leadership, it poses a fight for undefined policies for an undefined period. As for the RCT's claim that the slogan "Win the NDP to Socialism" appearing on the walls and press of the Trotskyist cadre organization,

spreads illusions about the NDP – that we think the NDP actually can make the revolution – is this to be taken any more seriously than claims that many other slogans we have promoted such as "For a Red University", "For a Labor Administration in City Hall", etc. spread illusions about the essential nature of the university and the nature of city hall, a bourgeois institution?

(Again,) we don't want to haggle over words, but whatever the shortcomings of "Win the NDP to Socialism" the slogan "Fight for Socialist Policies in the NDP" is not a substitute. Quite the contrary. The latter slogan would flow logically from a policy of abandonment of our longstanding orientation to the NDP.

Young and Riddell affirm that our orientation to the NDP is not one of "an entry into the NDP." Elsewhere they say that the Canadian movement is opposed to entry *sui generis*. The term entry *sui generis* means an entry of a special type, different from entries into reformist formations that had been established as correct previously by our movement such as Trotsky's proposal that the French comrades enter the French SP (*Socialist Party*), and the experience of the SWP with the Socialist Party of the US in the thirties. The trouble with entry *sui generis* is that there is no common concept of what it means. It is very difficult to reject out of hand what is called on entry of a special type. What the Canadian Trotskyists rejected was how some Canadian supporters of entry *sui generis* conceived of it at a certain time in Canada. It turned out that what they proposed we should practise was liquidationism into the reformist labor party. We also rejected it as we come to understand how many of our European comrades practised it for a period.

We have never at any time described or conceived our orientation to the NDP as an entry — either of a special type or as an entry of any other kind. It is an orientation, within which for a time we happened to conduct on entry, but it itself is not an entry into, but an orientation to the NDP.

When the Canadian labor party took on the form of the NDP we actually strengthened and firmed up the public and independent expressions of Canadian Trotskyism to where we now publish a monthly youth paper and two twice monthly papers, one in English and the other in French.

But having said that, we should not at all pretend that the NDP is just an important work area and that we have had merely a tactical stance to the NDP/CCF now for some two decades. It is within that framework, in harmony with the RCT is line he supports, that Germain attacks our orientation. And we must say that this is the framework accepted by Young and Riddell in their reply. It is quite misleading to pretend that the Canadian Trotskyists have been functioning in their relationship to the labor party formation in their country in much the same way as some other Trotskyist organizations where there are also labor party or social democratic party formations, for instance, in the same way as the International Marxist Group in Great Britain where there is a powerful labor party formation.

The Canadian Trotskyists do not have a relationship to the NDP that parallels in any way the relationship that we understand the IMG has to the British Labor Party. Nearly all comrades belong to the Canadian labor party, some today are very active within it, hold leading posts in it and are not publicly known as members of the LSA-LSO. Because the League is a proscribed organization by the NDP brass, many comrades use pseudonyms in their internal work in the League.

The League does not parade around with the banner of the Fourth International or wave the hammer and sickle at every opportunity. It does not declare here, there and everywhere that it is the Canadian Section of the Fourth International. While it doesn't hide it, it doesn't headline it either, and has followed a policy, while adhering to the line of the Fourth International, of publishing all the official statements of the Fourth International as information to its readers. It has given up some of the forms of other Trotskyist sections all the better to employ the essence of Trotskyism in the Canadian context.

We should not cloud this question by assuming an "orthodox" front, by presenting our orientation in quite a different frame of reference than it has been. We should communicate our experience to all the sections of the Fourth International as we did by submitting our 1970 document to the world discussion. We should defend our position as it has been.

Young and Riddell, all the more in the light of these comments, may object that their "Some Starting Points for an NDP Debate" with Comrade Germain, is an insufficient document. We agree completely. However, while it is insufficient it is regrettably all that they have given us as to their thinking or the direction of their thinking.

The Young/Riddell document suddenly appearing in the international discussion dealing with a fundamental aspect of our work, over which there has been developing unease during the past year, unhappily confirms our worst fears. Our failure to make any gains from the Waffle left wing experience in the NDP, and the inevitable questioning that this would give rise about our orientation, the increasing pressure of ultraleftism on our movement, the development of an ultraleft current within our ranks which centred its attack on our NDP orientation, posed serious challenges to us. The response of the central leadership failed to defend our orientation. Rather, our press, with growing frequency, has published a whole series of articles showing a clear trend to a sectarian revision of our line amounting to an abandonment of our orientation.

Although grave damage has been done to our orientation, there is still time to call a halt. The red lights are flashing. The comrades who have united in the Labor Party Tendency are alarmed at this process of abandonment of our NDP orientation, the most important acquisition of Canadian Trotskyism, an orientation that remains the fundamental cornerstone of non-sectarian revolutionary politics. We must note that the direction that the LSA-LSO is moving in on this most important question unleashes a certain dynamic – one which will necessarily lead to a qualitative transformation of the LSA-LSO.

January, 1974

-----*Two key publications*-----

On the Labor Party by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels

Selections from the writings of the two great socialist thinkers outlining the

need for the working class to advance from trade union to political consciousness and to build a mass political party of their own. Engels' suggestions to his co-thinkers In North America are particularly relevant today.

Two Manifestoes

Contains a statement "Turn Toward Socialism," addressed by a group of BC provincial executive members to the 1975 provincial convention, which is indeed prophetic in the light of the party's recent setback there. The other, entitled "For a Radical. Revitalized NDP," was advanced by a number of prominent NDPers at the Ontario 1975 convention.

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